

CHRISTIAN COURIER

A Reformed Biweekly

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World Council delegates in Harare



George Vandervelde was there! See pp. 12, 13, 23.

A website for every purpose under heaven

Christians' increasing entanglement in the Web

(religiontoday.com) — Dale and Lorrie said "I do" on New Year's Eve — "live" on the Internet. The bride, groom and teary-eyed guests gathered at First Baptist Church in Hollidaysburg, Pa., east of Pittsburgh.

Meanwhile, 280 miles away in Lynchburg, Va., Jerry Falwell stood at his pulpit. Falwell officiated at the wedding — virtually. His voice boomed and his image filled a screen in front of Dale and Lorrie. Guests in the pews watched while "virtual guests" in other cities — who had "invitations" by password — watched by computer.

It was all legal, said Dale, who checked with Blair County, Pa., officials. The groom, who, not surprisingly, is a gung-ho "computer

guy" employed by an Internet technology company called WebcastCenter, refers to his nouveau nuptials as the first "teleconferenced/webcast wedding." He saw a chance to do something technologically as well as spiritually memorable when Falwell agreed to perform the ceremony but couldn't make it to Pennsylvania, Dale explains.

His bride-to-be initially wasn't thrilled. "What have you done to my intimate, candlelight wedding?" was her first reaction. But she came around. The ceremony is now recorded in an archived file on the couple's website, where it is available to the world.

Getting married on the Web is "a small example of what webcasting can do," Dale says. "I

believe people will stand up and take notice of how our wedding can be distributed to distant loved ones who cannot be present."

For better or for worse, North Americans are getting wed to the Web. It seems that the ways it can connect people and resources are virtually limitless.

Webcasting is being used in everything from classroom instruction to international meetings, to Billy Graham crusades. On Oct. 24, the innovative octogenarian became the oldest evangelist to preach in cyberspace, speaking in person to 74,000 in a Tampa, Fla., stadium while thousands of others simultaneously logged onto computers to hear his presentation.

See **GRAHAM** page 2...

Divorce Act to defend rights of children

Alan Doerksen

OTTAWA — When parents get divorced, their children can be deeply hurt, but often children's voices go unheard during the divorce process.

A new government report, called "For the Sake of the Children," seeks to address the needs of the children caught in the middle of divorce, and to make their voices heard more clearly.

The report was produced recently by the parliamentary special joint committee on child custody and access after more than a year of hearings and the calling of more than 500 witnesses,

including children affected by divorce.

"My family is dead. It is gone. It doesn't exist. The system gave it the final deathblow," Danny Guspie of the National Shared Parenting Association told the committee. "Here is how I was helped by the system: it cost me everything — my self-esteem, my confidence, my self-assuredness as a young man, security, peace of mind and the ability to cope with life. For my parents, it cost them a heck of a lot of money and estrangement from me for many years.... Most children of divorce seek to escape this painful reality

they are trapped in with petty crime, substance abuse, and promiscuity."

Can't divorce children

Co-chairing the committee was Ontario Senator Landon Pearson, who calls herself the "senator for children and youth." Defending the report, Pearson states, "Any way that we as a society can make the breakup of marriage a less adversarial process can only benefit children. Adults divorce each other; they do not divorce their children."

The rights of children affected

by divorce are a major focus of the report. Some of these children told the committee about the pain and upset that their parents' divorce had caused them. They spoke about their worries and fears, their sense of loss, and their feelings of exclusion from a legal process that had such a direct impact on their lives. According to the report, these children wanted changes in the ways their parents and the courts made decisions that affected them.

The report contains poignant quotes from children of divorce.

See **GENDER** page 3...

Homosexuality report 1999

In this issue we take a look at the report given by the committee to give direction about and for pastoral care for homosexual members, a committee appointed by Synod 1996 of the Christian Reformed Church. The first part of that report has been out to the churches for a while; the second part is being prepared for the Agenda for Synod 1999. We have asked four pastors to give us their reactions, we have printed two letters to the editor on the subject and we have included an article that challenges the Christian Reformed Church to do more for its homosexual members. An editorial on the topic completes this issue's treatment of an issue that is on the agenda of many church assemblies and synods.

Editor

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Graham: oldest evangelist to preach in cyberspace

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Cameras in Tampa shot the event, and the signal was uplinked to a satellite that beamed it to a webcast server in Virginia, where it was converted to a computer-friendly format and presented "live" on the Internet.

"For the first time the Internet is being used for evangelizing," Graham told *Christianity Today*. "My hope is that it will reach additional thousands of people in the years to come. The Internet is only the beginning of what is on the way."

Web 'ministries' and global pulpits

California pastor and evangelist Greg Laurie also uses the Internet to broadcast his high-energy Harvest crusades, oriented to Generation X.

The Internet is emerging as a global pulpit for Christians, experts say. People are using the Web in at least 140 nations, and faster, easier access to sites

through new technologies makes it even more attractive.

Religious sites increasingly are considered to be legitimate ministries, says Paul Lee, co-editor of *Heartlight* magazine and a consultant with the GOSHEN Christian site.

"It used to be that Christian websites were viewed mainly as a hobby and weren't taken too seriously," Lee said. "Finding funding for an Internet-based ministry can be a real challenge, because so many people think that if it's on the Net, it's all fun and games. Recently that has begun to change. More and more web ministries will be recognized in the future as powerful, life-changing forces, just like their 'real life' counterparts."

Evolution of the "congregational" website is another trend Lee sees. "At first if your congregation had a web page, it was a bit of a novelty. Somebody's cousin Larry knew some HTML [Internet codes] and put up the page."

Many sites have become tools for the congregants more than outreach programs, he said. "Eventually, forward-looking congregations will develop an 'intranet' for their members where they can get news, chat, study, and maybe even attend services, all online."

Online 'fellowship'

In 1995, seven per cent of adults were hopping onto the Internet. In 1996 it was 20 per cent; by last year, 36 per cent, a Harris Poll found. When the U.S. government took a survey last year, it found Web traffic doubling every 100 days. About 300 million people will be using the Internet worldwide by 2000. And Christians are doing their share of surfing.

The big trend for Christians "is that so many of us are online," Mark Kellner, computer columnist for the *Washington Times*, told *Religion Today*. "This can build community and hope."

Three years ago Kellner wrote *God on the Internet* (IDG Books Worldwide), which discusses spiritual resources then available on the Internet. Things have changed a lot since then. This year he will publish a version with new details on the explosive growth of church and denominational activities online.

Growth of the Internet "can only be seen as good news," Kellner wrote in a recent column that appears on the Internet. There are more places on the Internet where Christians can find fellowship, he said. "Are you the only Moravian in your part of the world? Fear not, online fellowship is just a click away. Is there some part of Scripture you need to research more deeply? Here, too, there are many more resources available than there were a few years ago."

Have search engine, can travel

Resources have become abundant, to say the least. And all you need is a search engine to check them out. They include the texts of

sermons by some of the greats of history, such as Charles Spurgeon and Jonathan Edwards, resources for pastors and youth leaders, listings of conferences and seminars, home pages of almost every church denomination and sizable Christian ministry, and daily news from a Christian perspective. There also are music reviews and Christian merchandise for sale.

Internet users can listen to broadcasts of Christian radio stations and CDs of Christian music, learn about other religions, receive encouragement from daily devotionals, peruse magazines, communicate in chat rooms, find information about home schooling and Christian schools, and locate employment in ministries.

Searching the Scriptures in various versions as well as tapping into resources such as commentaries, concordances, dictionaries, and lexicons have become some of the most popular uses of the Internet by Christians, statistics show.

Virtual church

All of this will change Christianity in ways yet to be seen as the so-called virtual church develops. Part of the answer to the question, "Why aren't young people attending church?" is that many are turning to the Internet for their religious input. One of six teen-agers say they rely on the Internet to augment their spiritual needs, and in the future some of them expect to stop attending brick-and-mortar churches altogether, the Barna Research Group found. By 2010, Barna researchers say, between 10 per cent and 20 per cent of U.S. Internet users will rely solely on the Web for worship or to otherwise access their faith.

TwoBecomeOne

Guest Registry

Thank you for joining us on our wedding website. Please take the time to let us know you were here. It is our earnest desire to keep you updated on our progress. We are putting together a scrapbook, of sorts. We would very much like to know where you heard about our site so we can go see as well

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Dale and Lorrie's wedding website.

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Jul 01, 05, 08, 12	759	699	599
Jul 15, 19, 22, 26, 29	799	739	599
Aug 02, 05, 09, 12	799	739	599
Aug 16, 19, 23, 26, 30	759	699	599
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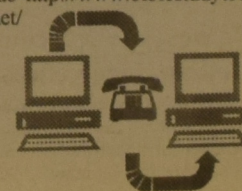
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News/Family

Gender bias, unethical practices plague divorce courts

... continued from page 1

"Court will help with custody and stuff, but it won't help with the feelings you have inside you," said one 12-year-old witness.

"They're deciding your life and your future but they don't even know you," commented a 15-year-old.

None of the children who testified said divorce was a good thing. What they did speak about was the disruption in their lives and the severe emotional distress that accompanied their parents' divorce. Several children testified that they should have someone, such as a lawyer, a child advocate, or a member of the extended family, to represent children in court.

Gender bias against men

The committee responded by recommending that:

- those whose parents divorce have the opportunity to express their views to a skilled professional, whose duty it would be to make known those views to any judge [in a divorce case];
- a court have the authority to appoint an interested third party, such as a member of the child's extended family, to support and represent a child experiencing difficulties during parental separation or divorce.

The report highlighted gender bias in the courts and unethical practices by family law lawyers as two problems with the divorce system. Many fathers testified about being discriminated against by courts because of their gender, and some lawyers agreed this happens.

Lawyer Bruce Haines told the committee, "I've been practising law for 35 years. When I entered the practise of law, Mom stayed at home, Dad was the breadwinner, and she looked after the children.



Senator Landon Pearson

We developed and still carry on with the attitude that mother knows best and father pays best when it comes to issues of child custody and support."

Non-existent relationship

Some fathers shared their profound unhappiness about difficult divorces that often culminated in a minimal or non-existent relationship with their children. To address this problem, the committee recommended that "There shall be no preference in favor of either parent solely on the basis of that parent's gender."

Although many fathers testified about the problem of denial of access, many women argued that the problem for them was the opposite: fathers who do not make use of the access they have been given by agreement or in a court order. Mothers and women's groups testified that, in these types of situations, it is the mothers who have to deal with their children's disappointment, sadness and anger when their fathers do not appear when expected.

Many witnesses, including several lawyers, alleged that some

family law lawyers make a practise of escalating the fight between divorcing parents. These practises include encouraging clients to make false claims of abuse and encouraging women to invoke violence as a way to ensure an advantage in parenting and property disputes. To deal with this, the committee suggested the federal government develop policies to promote action on clear cases of perjury or obstruction of justice.

The committee also called for changes to the language of the Divorce Act. It recommended that the terms "custody and access" no longer be used, but be replaced by "shared parenting."

To help children further, the committee recommended that divorcing parents be encouraged to attend at least one mediation session to help them develop a parenting plan for their children. Such a plan would set out details about each parent's responsibilities for residence, care, financial security for the children, and the dispute resolution process.

Decision makers such as parents and judges determining the best interests of the child should consider the views of the child, the child's cultural and religious ties, and the ability of the child to adjust to proposed parenting plans, recommended the committee.

The relationships of grandparents and other extended family members should also be recognized as significant, and provisions for fostering these relationships should be included in parenting plans, said the committee.

Not far enough

Although they agreed on many points of the report, three Reform MPs who were on the committee wrote a dissenting report, explaining areas in which they felt the committee's report didn't go far enough. One Reform recommendation that was not accepted was that grandparents not be required to seek "leave of the court" if they choose to file their own court action for the making of parenting plans.

Another recommendation was for enforcement of parent-child contact terms, "as rigorously as child maintenance.... Capricious non-compliance of ordered parent-child contact could be considered a form of child abuse, and treated accordingly during enforcement proceedings."

The report's recommendations will now go to Justice Minister Anne McLellan for further action.



Marian den Boer

A lesson on looking good

"Charm is deceptive, beauty is fleeting; but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised." (Proverbs 31:30)

The appeal said: "Be the balanced woman God designed you to be." This was the theme of the Saturday morning women's meeting at church. The guest speaker was to be an image consultant and the special feature, an instant facelift.

Our speaker challenged us to come away with at least three things. She began by telling us a right relationship with God is essential for being a healthy, balanced woman. After that, she listed air, water, food, fitness and skin care.

On the other side of the board, our image consultant listed incidentals: color, "paint," body type, clothing personality, personality type and scent.

'What's that stuff?'

I learned that I should tuck in my stomach, drink two litres of pure fresh water a day, and to avoid coffee as a poison. I also learned something about incidentals. I learned that good quality make-up, applied right, helps a woman look great.

I could use a lesson in this. The only time anyone has seen me in make-up is when someone else has applied it — as on my wedding day. I have just never bothered learning about make-up, even as a teenager. My attitude could have something to do with my dad's negative attitude toward "face paint": "What's that stuff?" Besides, I didn't have any sisters to encourage me.

Over the years, I've dabbled with make-up. I own a tube of lipstick and sometimes even remember to put it on. But every time I try to wear mascara, it is all over my face within the hour. And it makes my eyes itch.

Inner and outer 'glow'

Anyway, I had a delightful time this particular Saturday morning at the church watching one of the pastors (we have women pastors in our church) have make-up applied to half of her face. There wasn't time to do the whole face, and as it was explained to us, "This way we would be able to see the contrast."

The make-up took at least half an hour to apply. There was under stuff and other stuff, eye stuff, lip stuff, blush, and over stuff, all applied with top quality brushes (you can tell I didn't take notes).

All that stuff made our pastor glow. I don't mean that exactly. She always seems to be glowing, especially when she is talking about the Lord. The make-up put a glossy finish on her. You know, when you take your pictures in to be developed and you can choose the matte finish or the glossy finish. This gave her a glossy finish. She looked good — like she always does, except with a glossy finish.

So I came away from the Saturday morning session with more than three self-improvement ideas. I am going to tuck my stomach in, drink two litres of water a day, stop consuming so much coffee and maybe I could get my make-up done professionally on special occasions. For everyday life, I'll just work on that inner glow.

Marian den Boer lives with her husband, Marty, and five of their six children in Hamilton, Ont. They worship at the Life Centre in Burlington, Ontario.

School board dismisses charge brought by gay teacher

BAKERSFIELD, Calif. (EP) — A school board voted Jan. 11 to dismiss a discrimination complaint brought by a homosexual teacher who said 15 students were illegally transferred out of his eighth-grade class because their families disapprove of homosexuality.

The Rio Bravo-Greeley Union School District board voted unanimously to dismiss the complaint from teacher Jim Merrick after a closed hearing on Monday. The board determined that Superintendent

Ernie Unruh had followed district policy in removing the students after parents complained that their children were uncomfortable with Merrick's mannerisms and statements about homosexuality.

Last November, a U.S. federal judge in Salt Lake City, Utah, ruled that schools may not prohibit homosexual teachers from talking about their sexual orientation in school.

Editorial

Taking a stand on homosexuality

Letters from a senior to a junior editor (6)

My Dearest Wordgood:

During my editorship, the topic of homosexuality came up several times. Homosexuality is what Tony Campolo describes as one of the 20 hot potatoes Christians are afraid to touch. The reason they are afraid to touch it is because there is no unanimity on the subject and because it is a political issue. The minute you state your position, you find yourself embroiled in a power struggle. The same was true for the ordination of women and abortion. You can tell whether something is political when pressure groups form around the issue. I don't need to tell you that there is a strong pro-gay movement in our society, even in our churches, and, to a lesser extent, an anti-gay movement (though there are plenty of individual gay bashers).

"Homosexuality" is one of these no-win issues – no matter what you write, you arouse the ire of a segment of the population. Let me illustrate from some recent personal experiences.

Last September, I decided not to publish an unsolicited report on Rev. Mel White's keynote address to an AWARE conference held in Kitchener, Ont. I made that decision because I felt the report was slanted and was designed to make those Christians feel guilty who believe that practising homosexuality is sin. I had read Mel White's autobiography *Stranger at the Gate* (White is now a gay pastor in the Metropolitan Community Churches), and I was not impressed with how he described a one-night-stand with a man he happened to meet on the street as a gift from God. And this while he was married and had kids!

My decision not to publish the story elicited the following comments from the person who had sent me the story: "I know that for many Christian Reformed people who are on the fringe, gay or straight, you represent the worst tendencies of the old traditional CRC. The vision you impart through the CC is viewed as narrow, prosaic and stifling. There is no life in it." In addition to this condemnation, a CRC pastor who learned of my refusal to publish called me a coward.

A few months later, the first brother apologized to me after he read my coverage of the Campolo discussion at the University of Toronto (CC Dec. 18). But that same coverage elicited anger from another corner when a reader accused me of being wishy-washy and following other media who spread disgusting theories about homosexuality.

As you can see, My Dear Wordgood, you can't win on these issues. But I hope that will not keep you from stating your convictions when it is helpful to do so.

Unconditional love

My own position on what the Bible teaches about homosexuality has not changed very much over the years, although my attitude *has*. I have gained a lot of sympathy for and understanding of the difficulties gay and lesbian people encounter as they reap the consequences of dealing with an orientation they did not choose. I did that by reading articles and books, by attending a few AWARE meetings and other events that discussed the topic, and by associating with gay people. I do this by practising unconditional love.

Of course, I have been told by pro-gay persons that, unless I change my position to one of full acceptance of truthful same-sex relationships, my love is conditional. My non-acceptance is considered a condition. I do not agree with that diagnosis. Unconditional love means you accept the person even if you entertain objections to what he or she is doing. That person does not have to meet certain *conditions* before he or she is worthy of your love. God himself practiced unconditional love when he sent his Son to die for us "while we were yet sinners." I am not saying that I am always capable of practising unconditional love. From time to time I fall prey to my sinful inclinations or to a certain spiritual poverty. But that failure is not owing to my views, which I try to line up with what the Scripture teaches.

Jesus demonstrated unconditional love when he refused to judge the woman caught in adultery. He showed her respect and compassion. But he did tell her to go and sin no more. Unconditional love does not mean we have to approve of truthful same-sex relations. Yet that is basically what the gay movement in the church is after. However, when the 1973 report of the Christian Reformed Synod urged churches to incorporate their homosexual members into the life, fellowship and offices of the church, it had in mind homosexual members who lead celibate lives.

I try to let the love of Jesus shape my attitude to all people, including my homosexual neighbor.

Not convinced by alternative interpretations

But, as I indicated earlier, Dear Wordgood, my position on what the Scriptures teach about homosexuality has not changed over the years. I have never been convinced by those who argue that Romans 1: 24-32, for example, applies only to heterosexual people who act against their orientation by engaging in same-sex relations.

I heard a sermon on this passage two summers ago at St. John's Anglican Church at Shaughnessy in Vancouver. (St. John's is an island of biblical orthodoxy in the Greater Vancouver sea of Anglican liberalism. Bishop Michael Ingham is in favor of blessing same-sex unions, although he has postponed implementation for two years. He also thinks that Christianity is just one way to God.) Preacher David Short gave what sounded to me like a fair, loving and faithful exegesis of this passage that contains the well-known text about God giving people over to their sinful inclinations: "Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones. In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another."

According to Short, this passage, along with others in Scripture, brings unqualified condemnation to homosexual activity. But he added that homosexuality is never allowed to be the central issue in Scripture, not even in Romans 1. Other sins like greed, envy, strife, gossip, slander, arrogance and heartlessness, mentioned later in this chapter, earn its unrepentant practitioners the same fate: death. And those who approve of those who practise these sins are equally guilty (vs. 32).

Homosexual activity is not any more (nor less) sinful than any other sin, and homosexuals are no greater (or lesser) sinners than other sinners. The most fundamental sin in this passage, as elsewhere in Scripture, is that

people do not acknowledge and honor God. In his sermon Short provided evidence that he was familiar with the literature surrounding homosexuality, as he presented various pro-gay interpretations of Romans 1.

Biblically correct

I later received from that church in Vancouver a taped sermon by a certain Tony Dolfo-Smith, who was equally clear in his condemnation of homosexual behavior. What was surprising was that in the middle of the sermon he revealed that he had once lived the homosexual lifestyle and believed the gay theology but that, by the grace of God, he discovered that living according to "God's creative intent" for him brought greater happiness. Through a long, arduous process he is now healed from his homosexual urges.

He felt that in his earlier years he was hindered from being healed by a church which condemned him but offered no healing, as well as by Christians who wanted to be kind and thought it more important "to be politically correct rather than biblically correct." "If someone had not held up the biblical injunction to me, I would have missed the wonderful experience of a whole relationship with a whole woman and missed being able to be the father of four wonderful children," were his final comments.

I think the issue of homosexuality will remain a contentious issue and may well lead to persecution of those who believe that God does not want us to go against his creational intent as expressed in Genesis 2: that a man and a woman reflect his fullness in a complementary, other-sex union. In fact, the persecution has already begun, as is evident from Trinity Western University's struggle against the British Columbia College of Teachers, which refuses to grant TWU the final year in the education degree program because TWU has a staff/student policy that forbids immoral activity, including homosexual practices.

My Dearest Wordgood, don't be afraid to take a stand. Take your theology from above, not from below.

*Affectionately yours,
Truetype*



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CHRISTIAN COURIER STAFF

Editor: Bert Witvoet cceditor@aol.com
Managing Editor: Marian Van Til ccmneditor@aol.com
Promotions & Marketing Director: Diane Klein
ccadpromo@aol.com
Reporter, Layout: Alan Doerksen ccjournal@aol.com
Circulation Manager: Grace Bowman ccsubscrip@aol.com
Advertising, Layout: Ingrid Torn ccadpromo@aol.com

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4-261 Martindale Rd., St. Catharines, ON, L2W 1A1
Tel: (905) 682-8311; 1-800-969-4838
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E-mail: cceditor@aol.com

Letter

God has a purpose for everything

After reading the articles about cancer and about Mrs. Van Kampen, I decided to respond by writing. Mrs. Van Kampen was not only my mom's best friend, but mine too. I also suffered from cancer but I survived with the help of family and friends, Mrs. Van Kampen being one of them. She would often come to sit with me in the hospital when my parents needed a break.

Cancer is a destructive disease, both physically and emotionally. The Van Kampens, although not always sure how my parents felt or how to respond, were always there to support us. They were the first to know when I relapsed, and they were beside us — again.

By the time my hair started to grow again, Mrs. Van Kampen knew what it meant to lose your hair and how much hair really means to people. So when I went to get my first haircut, she cut only a very (and I mean very) small amount of hair off. I wanted to grow my hair long, and she knew it.

I want to share my essay, which I wrote for English class just before Mrs. Van Kampen died. I didn't realize that it would touch so many people. Mrs. Van Kampen and I have one thing in common: Jeremiah 29:11. This passage was open on her casket and is at the end of my essay. We both believe that cancer and even death for her, was all part of God's plan for our lives.

My essay for English class

You would think once was enough, but God had a different plan for me. Suffering from leukemia twice was one of the best, and most spiritual experiences that I have gone through. The fact that death is a regular occurrence, and I one of its suspects, has been a frightening and eye-opening experience. It has shown me the ultimate power of God because I lived to tell of God's most awesome miracles and the power he portrays. He has a purpose to *everything* he does.

It was February 1992, a day I'll never forget. I came home cheerfully from school, and as I walked in the front door, I saw my mom in a chair, worried and silent. Her hair had fallen in her face and her eyes were wet. I knew something was terribly wrong, and the most drastic thoughts went racing through my mind. Nothing compared to what my mom told me: "Stacy, the doctor called. They found something in your blood, and they want to take a bone marrow test tomorrow." Horror crossed my face, and I wept. I was sick and dying once again.

We waited silently

After a sleepless night, my dad, mom, and I headed to the hospital. Condolences and encouraging words were expressed like: "Good luck"; "I hope things turn out for you"; "I'm sorry to see you here" as we entered the clinic and were guided to the examination room.



Stacy Visser: Joan Van Kampen (featured in CC's recent issue dealing with cancer) was her best friend.

The doctor strode in, sat down and pleasantries were passed. He explained why I was there and what he wanted to do as I sat in complete silence. The test was taken quickly, but the most challenging part lay ahead; we had to wait. We anxiously prayed, hoping God's will was not what was predicted. We aimlessly wandered the mall, hoping to cheer ourselves up, but it was to no avail. After a couple of long hours, we journeyed back to the hospital in an awkward stillness.

No words were spoken, and our eyes darted around the room as we waited for the doctor to arrive. He came in somberly with a look of sympathy. He quickly took his seat and his voice sighed: "We have to start over again." My first thoughts were to get back on the examination table to be tested again. I knew that's not what he meant when my mom slumped over, and tears were flowing from my dad's eyes. At that time, my peaceful world had crashed.

More and more sick

As time passed and I grew accustomed to the routine of treatments, I realized that being sick was no longer the end of the world. I had accepted God's plan for my life and put my faith and hope in him. I was happy because I knew that God didn't forget about me; he loved me and had a plan for me, whatever it might be.

The day of my transplant approached, and I became more and more sick. I was nauseous and tired, my mouth was covered in sores and my speech was limited. Loneliness, desolation, fear and anxiety were only some of the emotions I felt. I was a small part in a huge hospital, a star in the universe. My days were spent in agony because my stomach was overtaken by my enemy, graft versus host disease. Sometimes I would

scream in pain and think of going to heaven, my only safe haven.

That almost came true when I was waiting for the doctor and I had a seizure and went into a coma. However, dying was not part of God's plan at that time. I had to stay on this earth a little bit longer. I came out of the ICU in a couple weeks, dazed and confused. The doctors said I experienced some brain injury.

Time continued in a mist, and I drifted from sleep and semi-consciousness. My life seemed to be in chaos as I was visited and

re-visited by everyone I knew. Months passed without a second thought. As I gradually grew stronger, I was forced to walk around. My legs would crumple beneath me, and I needed support from my parents. I would walk halfway down the hall and back, where I would collapse into my bed. I was frustrated and would dread the moment when my nurse would announce, "Stacy, it's time to go for a walk."

No normal life

My mind and senses returned, along with the thoughts of "why?" I had endured more needles, more IVs, and seen more doctors than anyone I knew. Then came the nudging from within, and I knew it was all part of God's plan.

Just before Christmas, after four and a half months, I was allowed to go home. However, my suffering didn't stop there. A year later I returned, diagnosed with a parasite and malnourishment. At my age I should have been 80 pounds, but I was only 40. I was fed through a tube in my nose for two years, never reaching the desired 75 pounds. Finally, I was taken off when my mom realized that my appetite and love for food vanished since I had no need to eat anymore.

The illness never ends. Year after year, I am admitted for this and for that. I ponder to myself: "When will it stop? When can I lead a normal life?" The answer is never. I was not meant to be "normal." God made me special and unique.

"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future" (Jeremiah 29:11).

Stacy Visser
Ancaster, Ont.

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Letter/Media

CD Review

Those who are left behind still grieve

In the January 11 issue of CC, you published several articles on cancer, chemotherapy and all the emotions that accompany it. They were very well written, and I can relate to feelings expressed and have walked along the same journeys. I rejoice so very much with Angie Fast Vlaar and Nellie van Donkersgoed. Rejoice in the gift of remission and extended life. It is truly a gift! God still has a purpose for you on this earth. Accept it in joy.

Then I think about those for whom God's will was different. I read Joan Van Kampen's testimony and I know she is with the Lord. That is such a comfort for her loved ones who are left behind. Yet they are left behind, and regardless of the peace we have of knowing our loved ones are with the Lord, we have to deal with the ugly, empty grief of having to go

on alone. How can we help each other through this?

I believe we really don't know how. Can we learn? Probably, but only through experience; and that is such a very, very hard way. I had to learn that way, so I think that makes me more tolerant of those who are "miserable comforters," as Job says.

Two years is not enough

Two years ago the Lord took my husband to himself after he had let me have him for 37 years in a happy marriage. The marriage vow talks about walking life's pathway together, but through cancer the pathway led to a fork, and to a path I had to help him take, although I did not want him to. There are so many peaks and valleys on that path. In the last week of his life, Clarence said, "We prayed for a miracle, the miracle we wanted was not to be. But the Lord died for me and has a place for me. That is also a miracle!"

But now back to us who are left, especially us spouses. At the second anniversary of Clarence's death, I asked a close friend, "Do you consider me as still grieving?"

She answered, "Because I am close to you and you have shared a lot of things with me, I know you are still grieving, but most people would think that you have picked yourself up and are doing really well."

The fact that they think that is good. But although I can feel healing, there is still a lot of "front" which I put up. How can I tell you how I grieve?

God leads through the valley

I miss the little bickering that married couples do. I miss him coming into the house and calling "Where are you?" regardless of six kids who were also taking up space in the same residence. I miss crawling into bed when he would be crawling in on the other side. Then we would laugh, love and pray together. That's what married couples do. That is over. That is so very over, and I can get stuck in the pain, though I may not!

The Psalmist says God leads us through the valley of the shadow of death. *Through it! We don't stay in it.* That is taking me some time to claim and accept. I, as a widow, and all other widows and widowers with me, need the rest of you to gently, very gently, hold our hands and lead us *through* that valley when our tears blind us.

We all have our lowest of low valleys in life. But the promise is that there is an exit. Oh Lord, teach us to help each other find it.

Clara Bootsma
London, Ont.

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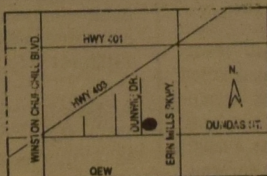
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An exuberant expression of faith

Marian Van Til

Sharon Riley & Faith Chorale: Life Is

EMI Gospel: EGD 0223. Executive producer, Ken Pennell; mastered by Ken Love at master Mix. E-mail EMI Gospel at: emi.gospel@emimusic.com. Sharon Riley and Faith Chorale are managed by Mekehla Music Group (Richard Picart): mekehla@ica.net.

Sharon Riley is a native of Toronto who describes her survival of a devastating 1990 car accident, which left her physically scarred and emotionally drained, as "a total miracle."

"I was totally unable to walk. Both legs were severely damaged. I had to learn how to sit up, remain sitting, stand up and eventually walk again," says Riley. In the midst of all that, Riley had the faith and fortitude to organize a gospel ensemble which became known as Sharon Riley and Faith Chorale.

The current ensemble consists of 25 voices, the core members being "a mixture of friends I'd worked with before and other talented people who heard about the choir and wanted to participate," says Riley. The group is culturally diverse, with members from Canada, the Caribbean, England and South America. This combination of cultural, spiritual and musical experiences gives depth to the ensemble.

Gaining acclaim

Riley's chorale is steadily gaining acclaim and has been nominated for a Juno Award. They've sung on the soundtrack of the film *The Blues Brothers 2000* and HBO's cable film *Light to the Power of Two*. They've also appeared on the Oscar Peterson Arts Person of the Year Award Show; the World Tournament of Basketball; CBC One's annual "Metropolitan Morning" Christmas show; the Salome Bey and Friends Christmas special; at the Special Olympics; and at Toronto jazz festivals.

This recording on a major label like EMI is a further attestation to what the group has to offer a mainstream audience.

This is exuberant music you can sing with, dance to and affirm as a confession of faith. Timid it isn't. To get the full benefit you need to



crank up the stereo (warn your housemates first) so that you can feel the beat. If you appreciate the vitality and authentic spirit of modern black gospel music, and enjoy other musical forms that originated in black culture — rap, rhythm and blues — you'll undoubtedly like this album. There is a variety of styles here, from slow and bluesy, to rap, to foot-stompin', hand clappin' electrified gospel.

The musicianship of Sharon Riley, of the chorale acting as a backup ensemble, of the five band members (keyboard/synthesizer, drums, electric bass, lead guitar, etc.), is top-notch. The production, as might be expected from a major label, is slick and flawless.

Sharon Riley's growing fame isn't going to her head; nor has it dampened her faith. When asked what she expects next, after the success of this recording, Riley said, "I've already received so much more than I've ever dreamed or had any right to expect. Just being alive and here to make this album is the greatest gift I could ever receive. All I could wish for now is that my life itself would be a testimony that blesses and wins souls to Christ."

Book Review

Where the Heart Is

Diane Klein

Home in Alfalfa

By Hugh Cook.

Oakville, Ont.: Mosaic Press, 1998. Softcover: ISBN 0-88962-677-4. 245 pp. \$16.95 Cdn, \$14.95 US.

What? You've never been in Alfalfa? Never even heard of it, you say? You won't find it on the map but it's a true place, nevertheless.

It's the small Ontario town in which Hugh Cook has set his new collection of short stories, *Home In Alfalfa*. Alfalfa is a place where rocking chairs wait "for people to sit in them and tell each other stories, a place so gezellig, as the Dutch would say, so homey it could never exist in real life but only in a dream."

and hearty folks that Cook winds the twine of his stories.

The book has a delightful and homey structure. It is divided into four sections, one for each season of the year. It is "A Year in the Life" of the well-meaning Dutch Alfalfans. Each "season" is made up of five stories, each story chronicling an event in the life of a small-town Canadian.

A peculiar ethnic humor

Meet the townspeople.

Are they generous? Well, ask Bonnie the waitress down at Lucille's. "What's the difference between a Dutchman and a canoe?" she laughs. The answer? "One of them tips."

Are they stewardly? Well, if you'd heard the story about Wild Oats, the boar, you wouldn't have to ask. "It's a story that people in our community love to tell often, so you know that by now they've had a chance to get it right, with all the exagger-

ations worked out, and what remains in the telling of it now is nothing but a clean patch of honest and truthful detail."

If you didn't know it was gospel truth, you wouldn't believe what Vander Leek, Lubbers and Klop have worked out regarding the, um, courtship of the boar and the sow. But why during church, and in the church parking lot?

Is this ethnic humor? Well, not exactly. Ethnic humor has a demeaning edge, but this is the kindest portrait of Dutch stiff-necked small-mindedness that

you'll ever read. And the most humorous and compassionate look at the tradition-informed practices of the Christian Reformed Church that you will ever come across.

'Ora et labora'

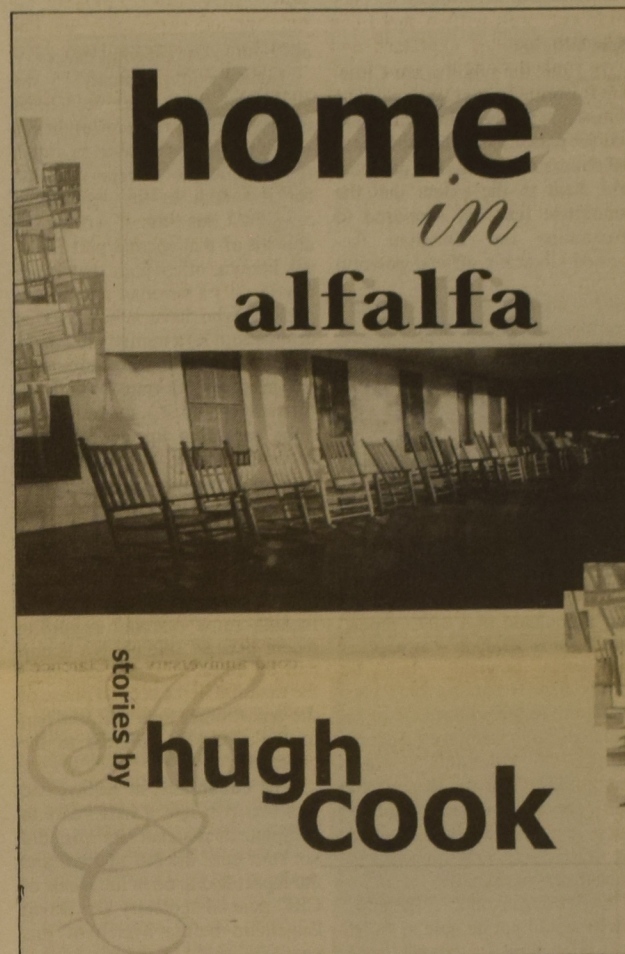
The Dutch of Alfalfa are prayerful folks: "Lord, as we are about to go on our homeward way now on the evening hour of this day we pray Thee now for travelling mercies...." That's how it is when some people pray: they never just drive home, they go on their homeward way. And they're not satisfied with the Lord's protection, they prefer his travelling mercies.

Meet poor Hilbert te Brake. How awful to have to laugh out loud in the doctor's quiet waiting room (he just happened to think of a funny joke). "You shouldn't be laughing in a doctor's office. Hilbert always feels, it's like a church that way, both are serious places. You know the gospel says 'Jesus wept,' but you've never read a text that says 'And Jesus split a gut,' now did you? Sounds almost sacrilegious, doesn't it. So there you are. Such profound thoughts come often to Hilbert, and he doesn't always know where they come from."

Charlie Wimmer, a former CRC member, ends up on his roof waiting for the Rapture. "Charlie left First Christian Reformed Church in town six years ago and joined the Blessed Assurance Tabernacle, where he can raise his hands and shout hallelujah and amen without other members of the congregation turning and glaring at him. St. Paul might well instruct believers to lift holy hands in prayer, even in the same chapter where he states women should be silent in church, but there are some folks at First Christian Reformed who consider the first command to be puzzling if not outright questionable because raising hands seems to them to be excessive emotionalism, but they will become extremely emotional should you question Paul's injunction about women."

Winter tests Calvinists

Winter is hard on the old people in Alfalfa, and many of them end up going to Florida. But Oetse Kikkert, 79, sticks it out in the cold every year waiting for spring. "Between Christmas and March, though, is one long dark night of the soul. Particularly if you're a



Calvinist. It's one thing if you're an atheist.... But if you confess that God's sovereignty rules everything and that it is he who fathers forth the snow, and you get up in the morning and see that he has just fathered forth yet another two-foot drift of it the length of your driveway — well, it can be not just a small quiz but a major test of your Christian faith." Which may be why Dorothy De Heer, the pastor's wife, dreams of slipping down to the Cayman Islands with her lover. How far does she get? Sorry, to find out, you have to read this story yourself!

Cook has done for Alfalfa what Stephen Leacock did in his time for Mariposa, and Garrison Keillor has done in our time for Lake Wobegon. Cook's drama will be particularly delightful to those who know (if not love) Dutch immigrants and their families and friends. The characters are wonderfully human, wonderfully flawed — like us. They have found

simple, livable solutions to the (small town) pains of their lives.

Donna Sprik experiences "the very effulgence and glory of the risen Christ" one Easter afternoon, in a very unlikely situation. George and Hillie Droge find God's forgiving love in a hot tub, of all places, so long after their moment of illicit desire. "Everyone should be so blessed," says Cook. In Alfalfa, Hugh Cook has created a present-day Eden, a little piece of Paradise where the town's people find healing, redemption and rest.

Florence Wiebenga may read romance novels, and she may dream she is Modesty Culloden falling prey to the rugged manliness of Lord McDougall. But, in church, at her daughter's wedding, "she realizes, for the first time perhaps, this town, these people, this sanctuary, are home. She could dwell here all the days of her life."

May we all arrive at such a home some day!



Hugh Cook

Perhaps the town exists only in our memories of simpler times past. Or maybe it's nothing but a literary blending of the real Ontario farm towns of Cook's extensive research. Or maybe it's a Canadian Brigadoon, existing only in legend, or in our dreams. But for sure the townsfolk are real: down to earth, hard workers, members of one of the six local Alfalfa churches.

Among them are a churchful — a Christian Reformed Churchful — of Dutch immigrants. It is around the lives of these hapless

Homosexuality

Christian Reformed synod committee calls for repentance

Bert Witvoet

In 1996, the synod of the Christian Reformed Church appointed a committee to give direction about and for pastoral care for homosexual church members. The mandate was clear to the extent that the committee was not supposed to re-examine the Christian Reformed Church's official position

of London, Ont., died of cancer.

But on Friday, January 15, the committee did meet in Grand Rapids, Mich., in spite of heavy snowfalls and was able to finish the final phase of its report, in time for inclusion in the *Agenda of Synod*. At this time of writing the content of that second part is not yet known, other than that it addresses: 1.) a spiritual ministry to persons who have a homosexual orientation; 2.) a ministry to family members and friends of homosexual persons; 3.) transformational ministries; and 4.) recommendations regarding justice concerns, such as housing, employment issues and community attitudes, recommendations which would help homosexual people in their struggle for social and legal equality.

An addendum to the report will include some material regarding recent genetic studies. No action will be asked of synod regarding the material in the second phase of the report other than that this part of the report be referred to the churches.

The committee, in reality, had less than two and a half years to complete its mandate. Its work did not start until the fall of 1996 and the report had to be in the hands of CRC general secretary Dr. David Engelhard before March of this year.

The first section

Much of the focus of the first part of the committee's report was finding out how well or poorly the church had done in its ministry to its homosexual members since the 1973 report. This report, which disapproved of homosexual intercourse, asked of the gay and lesbian persons change or celibacy and "promised the kind of pastoral

care and gracious fellowship that would help homosexual persons pursue those assignments with strong and deliberate support."

In January 1997, the committee sent out a survey to all Christian Reformed pastors, who were asked how well the pastors knew the 1973 report, whether their congregations were familiar with it, and how effectively pastoral recommendations had been carried out. The responses were not always encouraging.

Overall, 1016 questionnaires were sent out and 531 were returned. Of the clergy who responded, 74 per cent said that they knew the report very well. (May we assume that this figure would be much lower for those who did not respond?) But the responses from pastors seemed to suggest that very few congregation members have actually seen the report and that congregations are largely unaware of the 1973 report.

When it came to answering questions about effective implementation of recommendations made in 1973, the picture became even less positive. Of the questionnaires returned, only 17.5 per cent indicate that the guidelines had been effectively carried out in congregations. Many pastors said they had mentioned homosexuality in sermons, and some said they had actually preached on the topic.

Reasons given for lack of implementation included: 1.) lack of need (242); 2.) fear of the topic (88); 3.) feeling of inadequacy for the task (63); 4.) lack of perceived need (30); and 5.) disagreement with Report 1973 (18). The committee noted as significant that 77 per cent of respondents indicated "lack of need" as a reason why the guidelines had not been effectively implemented.



EDIN ELDER-MACLEAN'S

"Seeking the forgiveness of God as a church ... is more complicated than we wish," says the committee in its report.

According to the committee, "the survey results paint a picture of lack of awareness, denial and systematic neglect of homosexual members by pastors, councils and congregations, with only a few exceptions.

Seeking forgiveness

As a result of their disappointment in the content of the responses to the survey, the committee is recommending to synod that the churches seek forgiveness for their failures in not keeping their promises stated in the 1973 report.

"Seeking the forgiveness of

God as a church ... is more complicated than we wish," says the committee in its report, "for while the church as a whole has been quite silent, there is and has been within the church a community that is very familiar with the 1973 report.... This community within the CRC community is made up of persons among us who are the subjects of the report as well as many of their family members and other supportive friends.... All of them have been waiting, waiting for the church to keep something of its promises."

To give substance to their recommendation, the committee wrote a prayer by which churches can seek forgiveness for not keeping promises, for building walls around themselves, for calling names and using insulting language and for help to love "our gay and lesbian sisters and brothers."

As far as the committee is concerned, this should not be the end of the matter. It is their intention to submit a final report to Synod 2001, if Synod 1999 agrees to extend their mandate, so that, after churches have been given an opportunity to study the report and respond to it, the committee can "alter the report accordingly."

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Homosexuality

Pastors respond to CRC's 1999 homosexuality report

To further the discussion on the report submitted to Christian Reformed churches by a synodically appointed study committee, the "committee to give direction about and for pastoral care for homosexual members," we asked four CRC pastors to give their response to the first part of the committee's report to Synod 1999. Here is what they wrote:

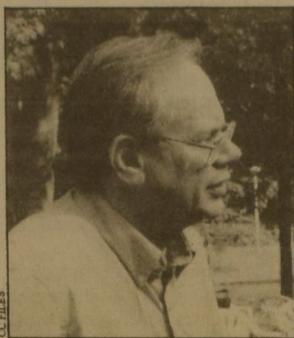
Many have been wounded

It never hurts for the church to confess areas in which it has failed. Ignorance and fear of homosexuality has certainly kept us from being sensitive to the very real struggle which such persons undergo.

At the same time it is important to understand that these struggles, intense as they may be, are not significantly different from the struggles that other people have in areas in which they have been wounded. We do a great deal of counselling at our church with wounded people, and unresolved emotional childhood hurts are almost always very painful and intense. Thank God, in Christ there is remarkable healing and restoration.

The challenge in expressing repentance for not adequately ministering to homosexual persons is to avoid the trap of condoning homosexual behavior. In our own church we have had several homosexual persons come forward in the last year or so. We do our very best to empathize with their pain. At the same time we encourage them strongly to deal with the underlying identity issues which we believe are the root of this problem.

For the church to successfully deal with the issue of homosexuality, it needs to develop a practical theology of healing and develop the kinds of ministries that can really make a difference. Otherwise, what happens is that people can



readily condemn homosexual behavior if it takes place at a distance. The moment it takes on a face and emotional ties enter into the picture, people are overwhelmed with the pain and thus modify their theology to deal with the problem. The result is a helplessness that says, "People must be born that way and who are we to try to get them to change?"

I believe this is a significant issue that will not go away and that must be addressed with an appropriate mixture of truth and mercy. One book on the subject that I have found very helpful is *Setting Love in Order*, by Mario Bergner (Baker). Himself a practising homosexual for many years, Bergner gives keen insight into the underlying issues.

Rev. John Visser
Maranatha CRC
Belleville, Ont.

No significance in Rimbey

Will the call to repentance (confession) have any significance? I doubt very much that it will here in Rimbey, Alberta. Repentance must have with it an intention to change behavior.

Council members expressed some consternation when I told them that I had responded to the questionnaire to which the report refers. They wanted to know on what basis I could do such a thing. Yet when I told them how I had answered the questionnaire, they conceded that my analysis had been correct.

What had we as a congregation done in regard to implementing the pastoral guidelines? Absolutely nothing. While I as pastor am aware of the guidelines, council as a whole was not. In fact, the issue of homosexuals has received little or no attention. I was told shortly after I arrived here that there were no homosexuals in our congregation, nor indeed in the town.

To an extent I presume this to be true. There are no homosexuals to deal with because this is simply not a safe place for that kind of self-exposure. Yet I know for a fact that there are homosexuals in our community, if not in our church, but they keep that fact very quiet for their own safety.

Yet as I have said from the pulpit, to be homosexual is not sin according to our synodical decision. Those with a homosexual orientation must be received in full fellowship as we would receive any member. Yes, and they can serve as officebearers as long as they remain celibate. But it is a long way from proclaiming what synod has said to accepting that in the pew.

Since the earlier report has had so little impact, I sincerely doubt that the new report will result in



COURTESY LLOYD BURGHART

any more acceptance. Synod can call for repentance; I can urge it; but will the members in the pew actually repent?

I suspect the problem will remain a problem until someone close to this congregation reveals

him- or herself as being a homosexual. Then the issue will take on a face rather than remaining an abstraction. Then, and only then, we will deal with the person and our attitudes.

Rimbey CRC is a small rural-based church which has been amazingly free from divorce, abuse or any of the negative things which affect so many more urban churches. That's a blessing. But it has negative consequences in that our members have had no experience in dealing as a congregation with these problems. Hence such problems remain faceless and as a result, undealt with.

Rev. H. Lloyd Burghart
Rimbey CRC,
Rimbey, Alta.

We must pray with integrity

Synod 1999 will "call the churches to repentance for their failures." What is it the churches failed in? In answer, the committee says that we have not lived up to the "pastoral guidelines to which Synod (1973) committed its pastors." To the extent that this is true, the call to repentance should be addressed to the pastors more than to all the churches.

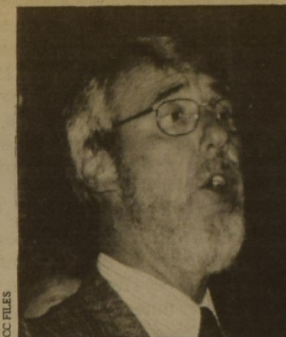
The committee proposes a prayer of repentance which includes the church confessing that "we have avoided [homosexual persons]. We have been cruel. We have called names and used insulting language.... We have wronged these children of yours, these brothers and sisters of ours, and we repent of our sins."

It is imperative that if the church prays these words it do so with integrity. I suspect, however, that many in our churches do not feel very guilty for having avoided homosexual persons. Church members may be unaware of who the homosexual members in their congregation are! Members do not always make their infirmities known — not to their pastor, let alone the whole church.

My experience in ministering to homosexuals is limited. Several I worked with were stricken with AIDS. However, once I became aware of their affliction and struggle I was able to minister God's compassion to them, and to help the church to do the same. I am not persuaded that our churches are unwilling to accept and extend genuine Christian fellowship to members struggling with homosexuality. Churches, however, can rightly be expected to resist calls for accepting homosexual practice.

Personally, I confess that I need to do more to create a church climate in which people feel safe to disclose their needs and hurts, homosexuals very much among them, and seek the prayers and support of the church.

Rev. Gordon Pols
Clarkson CRC
Mississauga, Ont.



CC FILES

A more positive direction

Part 1 of the committee's report is in, and its survey of the CRC has turned up a depressing amount of denial and neglect. The committee believes that, so far, the pastoral guidelines of 1973 are just words.

The report offers up a denominational prayer of confession for our failure, and given the committee's findings, it seems appropriate. We might want to reflect, though, on the value of a group confession.

Group confessions have be-

come common practice in the last while. Churches, governments, conferences of learned men and women have all apologized for past wrongs. When these wrongs involve official policy, an apology makes good sense. When they involve parts of the whole group in defiance of official policy, they make less sense.

Synodical repentance for CRC attitudes toward gay and lesbian members is appropriate in many cases — most cases it seems — but

not in others. The report admits, almost grudgingly, that some in the denomination are ministering to gays and lesbians. This ministry, like most pastoral care, is done quietly, within a zone of privacy, under rules of confidentiality. But it is happening.

Rather than making an apology that implicates everyone, synod can do two things. First it can reject homophobia — loudly. And second, it can issue a strong

See GUIDANCE page 10...

Homosexuality

Readers' voices on homosexuality

During the past few months we received some letters on the subject of homosexuality which we decided to collect and keep for this issue with its focus on the Christian Reformed Church and homosexuality.

Editor

We pleaded with our son: stay out of the gay lifestyle

About 10 years ago I read a book entitled *Setting Our Sights by the Morning Star*. It was written by Henk Hart. If I remember well, Hart explains therein that in the past, every method to interpret the Bible eventually failed. After that he gives a magic formula: set your sights on the Morning Star and every problem will be solved. At that time, it seemed a bit hard to believe, to say the least! Other articles I read made it clear to me where Henk Hart goes wrong in his thinking.

About 20 years ago, the synod of the Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland (GKN: Christian Reformed Churches in the Netherlands) told us to accept our gay brothers and sisters in love and compassion. They meant, in fact, accept homosexuals and their practice.

Saying goodbye by emigrating from our native country was not so hard any longer. We felt very uncomfortable with this synod. Little did we know how we would be confronted with this in our family 12 years later.

At that time, one of our children told us that he was homosexual. We were shocked, but we loved him even more. Now we understood why he had changed from a happy boy to a very quiet teenager and young man. He was 25 when he finally came out. As parents and siblings we pleaded with him to stay out of the gay lifestyle. We were so thankful that he had come out and revealed his orientation. He attended a meeting of AWARE (As We ARE), he told us, and that gave him the courage he needed to tell us.

Why call it a gift?

Homosexual people need support, and that [receiving support] is the positive side of AWARE groups. We were invited to those meetings and went a few times. We met very nice people there, but also some very bitter people. They feel misunderstood and lonely, and for very good reason. They want to be accepted *the way they are*.

At those meetings we discovered that "truthful" relationships between two homosexual people were promoted. There are homosexuals who stay out of sexual relationships, but they did not speak up at those meetings.

The others told stories about how they struggled and later decided to accept their condition as a gift from God. How can we see something so distorted as a gift from God?

As for our family: it is a mystery why this happens to people. But I am deeply convinced that the Lord has something better in store for homosexuals than the gay lifestyle (also in this life on earth). The church should never tell them that they can live the way they feel. None of us is allowed to do that.

Christ did not teach us to make ourselves comfortable in this world. He told us to deny ourselves if we want to follow him. And through the ages, Christians have experienced that only this [kind of discipleship] can bring true happiness.

We surround our son with love and prayers and we hope that the church will do that too. Our local church does. Our prayers have been answered so far. Our son is doing well with normal friendships. Let's not lose heart and call what's upside down in this world right side up. If Christians don't have answers, who will? Our God still does great things and will use us through his Holy Spirit.

Name Withheld

Giving in to homosexual desires needs repentance

Will the already fragmented Reformed community and, in particular, the Christian Reformed churches be in for yet another lengthy controversial dialogue with respect to the gay/lesbian questions?

From a report by Bert Witvoet in CC, Dec. 18, 1998 ("Husband and wife agree to disagree on homosexuality") and, in the same issue, an editorial by the editor on sexuality, it is quite evident that we have not heard the last of this debate. It will be interesting to see just how our clergy and other Christian leaders will respond.

Will churches lose members once this subject has received its final treatment? Will many of us be labelled as homophobes or ultra-conservatives because we want the inspired Word of God to be the final authority on all of this? Will our leaders compromise scriptural truth for accommodation?

The editor is right in saying that it is not always easy to determine whether people are being loving and openminded, or careless about biblical orthodoxy. The editor suggests that there are only some seven texts in the Bible which address homosexuality, and that Jesus himself does not even mention it. I should point out, however, that Jesus, who is the second person of the Trinity, is also the author of the holy and inspired Word of God.

The Bible speaks out against the sin of homosexuality in no uncertain terms.

Over-reaction

And now a committee of the Christian Reformed synod suggests that the CRC membership (that is, the heterosexual membership) repent of their attitude towards homosexuals.

I am not suggesting that our attitudes are always in harmony with the commandment to love one another, but sometimes we tend to over-react negatively to a volatile issue like this one. We particularly over-react negatively because all too often there are too many among us who do want to approve of a sexual orientation and lifestyle which is referred to in the Bible as disgusting. Think about it: that's *God's Word* speaking.

We need to repent of all of our sins: the sins of lust, pornography, sexual abuse, including the sin of homosexuality. We need to en-

courage one another to empower the Holy Spirit to perform a work of victory in us, also when it comes to sexual depravity. However, can we really expect to be victorious if we don't label our depraved desire sin anymore?

Clear language

The CRC synodical guideline of 1973 calls for gay and lesbian members to either change their orientation or remain celibate. I am suggesting that they cannot possibly do either one of the two without recognizing that the desire of their heart might be sinful and, in that case, repentance would be necessary.

The language of Scripture is very specific when it addresses the disgusting acts which homosexual men and women do with and to each other. Sin is still sin, and, yes, Jesus died for all of our sins, including the sins of gays and lesbians. That is grace, but it is not cheap grace.

When we truly desire to walk and talk in love with those among us who are afflicted by this particular sexual orientation then we do not endorse or condone it, but we show our love and willingness to walk with them from a repentant perspective.

Furthermore, let us remind each other that the discipline of the church constitutes the keys to the Kingdom of Heaven. Unfortu-

nately, too many see this discipline as an outdated church control mechanism.

Seeking victory

From experience I know, however, that there are pastors and church members within the Christian Reformed Church community who are quite willing and spiritually able to work with the homosexual. When a particular individual, who had enough self knowledge to confess that his lifestyle was sinful, sought help, after a long struggle (and we probably don't know half the struggle which the individual went through), the process of victory and celebration by God's grace became evident. This individual reached out to fellow Christian brothers and sisters within the church, and found support because a repentant and confessional attitude prevailed.

I believe Christians need to call a spade a spade, or, perhaps better put, sin a sin. If we seriously think about it all in the light of Christ's imminent return, which may be a lot sooner than many of us realize, why would we not encourage one another to repent and ask for forgiveness, and let God's Word be the final authority on what sin really is, and so experience God's amazing grace?

Albert Rumph
Thornbury, Ont.

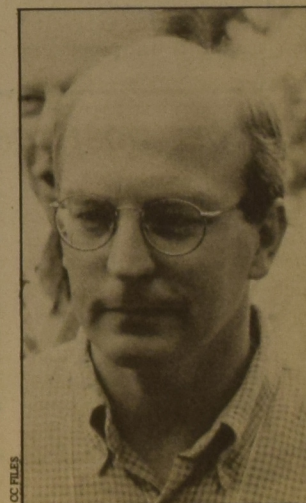
Guidance in a positive direction

... continued from page 9

reminder to the churches of the mandate given in 1973.

Over the last few years, unfortunately, gay and lesbian concerns were caught in our arguments about ordaining women. Over and over we heard that once we let women into the offices of the church, the gay lobby would come knocking. In that context, we worried more about church politics than about pastoral care, and we used the report of 1973 to confirm our orthodoxy instead of letting it guide our ministries. In coming years, synod can move us into a more positive direction.

Rev. Leonard Batterink
First CRC
Duncan, B.C.



Homosexuality

The Christian Reformed Church and homosexuality

Where are we and where are we heading?

John Vriend

I need not tell you that the subject of homosexuality is a hot potato, not only in the Christian Reformed Church but in almost all Christian churches, to say nothing of the world in general. The heat generated by the issue competes even with temperatures in the subtropics, where my wife and I were vacationing a couple of weeks ago.

On Saturday, April 11 last year, the day between Good Friday and Easter Sunday, I picked up a Bahamian newspaper whose front page, reporting on the services held the day before, featured pastors loudly denouncing the Nassau government for taking a dreadful decision.

Drive gays out of the churches during their growing-up years and they will seek refuge and comfort in safer settings among themselves.

What was this dreadful decision? It was the act of permitting cruise ships *exclusively reserved for gays and lesbians* to dock in the Nassau harbor, thus letting the tourists disembark and do what all other tourists do when they get to Nassau: flood the souvenir shops and jewelry stores.

What is this? asked the preachers rhetorically. It is a government-sanctioned invasion of blatantly immoral persons into our Christian nation! Sickening!

The irony there, in my opinion, was that the pastors completely failed to see that what they lamented was something they themselves were helping to create. Why were the gays and lesbians on a cruise ship exclusively for gays and lesbians? Most likely, because they feel unwelcome on regular cruise ships.

So what is the law we see operating here? The law that *in-group rejection leads to out-group bonding*. Drive gays out of the churches during their growing-up years and they will seek refuge and comfort in safer settings among themselves. Makes sense, doesn't it?

Today we are together looking for ways to make our churches safer for gays and lesbians. For those of us who are Christian Reformed, part of our agenda is to consider the guidance we have

received from that denomination over the past 25 years. That guidance was officially summed up in guidelines adopted by the Synod of 1973. Let me say a few words both about the strengths and weaknesses of those guidelines, as I see them.

The strengths of 'Report 42' (1973)

Those strengths, let me say, are considerable.

1. In the first place — and this I have always found liberating — in this report, and in the guidelines adopted by the synod, it is clearly asserted that homosexuality is *not a condition resulting from a conscious choice* by homosexuals any more than heterosexuality is the result of a conscious choice made by heterosexuals, say, sometime in early childhood.

2. In the second place, the guidelines adopted by synod tell us that gay Christians must be "wholeheartedly" embraced by the church as members of the Christian community. That is, we must divest ourselves of biases against them and learn to share their burdens.

3. Third — and here the CRC, at the time, was far ahead of many other denominations and ahead of many of its members — the guidelines call for the inclusion of homosexual persons "in the mission and ministry of the church so that their gifts would be employed in all parts of the church's ministry, including the offices of the church." Remarkable.

Four weaknesses

Now for the weaknesses. They too, in my opinion, are considerable.

1. Others before me have pointed to a certain abstractness in the report. They have cited the repeated use of the expression "the homosexual." One heading reads "the plight of the homosexual" as if all homosexuals — young and old, those who have married and have children, and those who celebrate their singleness — are all caught up in the same plight. What is lacking is a sense that homosexuals are as diverse a lot as heterosexuals and have a great variety of needs, weaknesses, strengths, gifts and opportunities.

2. A second problem with the report is that it operates from the very beginning with a dual perspective — that of "homosexual-

ity" and that of "homosexuality" — a perspective which does not arise from the Bible.

The former term ("homosexuality") was coined only about a century ago and the second ("homosexuality"), which stands for the practice of homosexuality, was somewhat whimsically chosen from a technical dictionary of ethics and never gained currency outside of the CRC.

These two terms become the tools with which the report seeks to discover guidance in the Scriptures. But because the Bible is not a textbook on ethics and knows nothing of a split between a condition that is not *per se* sinful and a practice that is considered very sinful, this search ends in failure.

The crucial challenge of this hour is the freedom to talk, and for all parties to become participants in this discussion, both straight and gay, "gay-positive" people and those who come across as "gay-negative."

3. A third weakness is that in seeking light from Scripture, the report suddenly narrows its horizons. Let me explain. Early in the report, to help us understand the phenomenon of homosexuality, it offers a wholistic description of sexuality. Sexuality, it says, is "the desire to give and receive in intimacy so that the 'aloneness' of a person is abrogated in the love relationship between man and woman..." (477). In short, sexuality is the drive toward bondedness with a person of the opposite sex.

Now this wholistic definition of sexuality also forms the portrayal of a homosexual's desires. "His [or her] desires cover the whole range of the rich interpersonal relations associated with the heterosexual form of sexuality, including love, understanding, friendship, the desire to belong to someone, and to develop one's humanity in constant companionship with another human being. What is different for the homosexual is that these feelings are experienced with respect

to a person of the same sex" (478).

Therefore, it is not merely a matter of physical attraction or uncontrollable lust that usually motivates homosexuals; it is the human quest for intimacy with someone. All this, I think, is most helpful in understanding the issue.

But now comes the matter of practice, of living one's life as a homosexual or, as the report calls it, the "explicit homosexual behavior." Note that the wholistic approach adopted at the outset no longer carries over in the understanding of the behavior. If it had carried over, one would expect homosexual behavior to have been defined as behavior seeking to fulfill the homosexual's need for love, understanding, companionship and intimacy (including its romantic expression in some form) with a person of the same sex. In contrast to the definition of the condition which is wholistic, the description of the expression of it is reductionistic.

4. A final and major weakness of the report is that the people on whom the burden of the report ultimately falls do not really feel pastorally addressed by it. On the contrary, the people I have spoken to (many of them mature, college-educated Christian gays) say it reinforces a climate in which they are forced to wear a mask. The theology it contains, they claim, is producing bad fruit. It is conducive to hopelessness and the fruits of hopelessness: alcoholism, drug abuse, promiscuity, suicide. Consequently, many of them in their search for wholeness have abandoned the CRC.

My dream

The crucial challenge of this hour is the freedom to talk, and for all parties to become participants in this discussion, both straight and

gay, "gay-positive" people and those who come across as "gay-negative." And in this connection I have a dream.

My dream is to have the synods of the Christian Reformed Church exhort all its agencies, especially its own and related Reformed educational agencies — Calvin College, Calvin Theological Seminary, Trinity College, Dordt College, The King's College, Redeemer College, and the Institute for Christian Studies in Toronto — to address the issue of homosexuality in their academic settings, and to have the same synods admonish those who would suppress all further discussion for promoting a policy that is bound to quench the Spirit (1 Thess. 5:19-21), that is unworthy of the Reformed tradition and damaging to the *shalom* towards which we presumably all work.

Let us all read our Bibles again with fresh eyes and a new openness, trusting the Holy Spirit to lead us into all truth. And let us invite our gay brothers and lesbian sisters to come out of their claustrophobic closets to join us in the search for the best available answer to our problems.

The truth is that without their active participation at all levels in the search for spiritually satisfying answers, we will make absolutely no headway whatever.

My dream, finally, is to have one such conference on a cruise ship sailing through the Caribbean to give the preachers of Nassau something real to talk about.

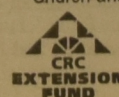
This article is part of a speech given by Vriend at a conference on homosexuality held April 25, 1998, at Hope Christian Reformed Church in Palos Heights, Ill. Dr. John Vriend lives in Grand Rapids, Mich.

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World Council

Colorful assembly engages in honest self-examination

All stories and photos by George Vandervelde

For the eighth time since its founding in Amsterdam in 1948, the World Council of Churches met in assembly in Harare, Zimbabwe, from December 3 to 14. A WCC Assembly brings together about 5,000 people. A little less than 1,000 of these are voting delegates.

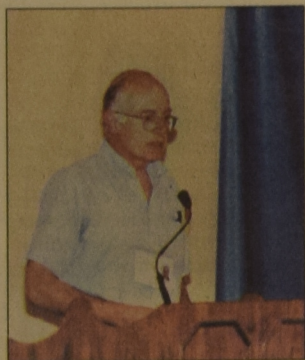
Since this marked its 50th anniversary, the biblical notion of Jubilee served as a pivotal point. Jubilee resounded not only in the theme "Turn to God—Rejoice in Hope," but in the call for renewal within the ecumenical movement, and for relief of the international debt for the poorest countries on our planet.

The festive note came through in moments of exuberant celebration in daily worship and in special events commemorating the half-century journey. Choirs rocked, some two to three thousand bodies swayed, rainbow robes swirled, African drums punctuated the notes of joy and ululations, a high-pitched descant soared above the songs.

Self-examination

Yet the festive occasion did not lure the gathering into a feast of self-congratulation. Quite the contrary. The Assembly setting itself precluded that kind of celebration. The focal point in the 3,000-seat worship tent was a huge wooden cross. Carved in its centre was Africa in outline.

Critics were quick to cluck their tongues at the effrontery of having



George Vandervelde attended the recent assembly of the World Council of Churches (WCC) in Harare, Zimbabwe, Dec. 3-14, as an observer on behalf of the Christian Reformed Church's standing interchurch relations committee. As a representative for the World Evangelical Fellowship—he is the convener of its task force on ecumenical issues—Vandervelde brought greetings on behalf of WEF. On these two pages he presents his impressions by way of pictures and text.

Africa rather than Christ on the cross. More discerning souls rejoiced in the symbolic lifting of the cross over Africa. Certainly the vibrancy of African Christianity, amidst often horrid suffering, testifies to the resurrection power of the Gospel.

But that power is displayed in a cruciform church. The awareness

that Africa is, in the words of Anglican Archbishop of Canterbury George Carey, "a bleeding continent," ruled out all facile feasting.

The opening presentations by general secretary Conrad Raiser and by moderator Catholicos Aram set the tone for much of the meeting: honest self-examination, even blunt self-criticism of the WCC.

The ecumenical ship has been navigating rough waters. Much of the financial wind has gone out of its sails; the Orthodox members are increasingly frustrated by the WCC's mode of operation and the course charted by the majority of the conciliar crew. And the ever-larger vessels flying Pentecostal and evangelical flags seem either to traverse different waters or to resemble ships passing in the night.

New measures

In response to these daunting challenges, the WCC has cut its budget and staff by one third, appointed a major commission, signalled the launching of a new ecumenical venture, and set out markers to chart the ecumenical course.

Over the next three years, a special commission, half of whose members will be Orthodox, will search for ways of overcoming the growing Orthodox frustration and alienation with respect to the World Council.

The proposed new venture will be a "forum for Christian churches and ecumenical organizations." It will be designed as a looser and broader framework in which

churches and organizations which are not connected to the WCC can sit at a common, larger table with those who are. The World Council will be one among many participants.

Finally, the Assembly set out four beacons that are to guide the

WCC through turbulent ecumenical seas into the next millennium. These beacons are marked: mission in a pluralist world; the foundational significance of one baptism; witness and action for the sake of the world; and visible church unity.

Two very different presidents



South African President Nelson Mandela

The presidents of two African countries addressed the Assembly: both were once freedom fighters, but how different is their present role. One of these is Robert Mugabe, president of Zimbabwe. He led the armed resistance to Ian Smith's regime in what was then known as Rhodesia. Now he has taken on all the powers of a dictator, spending millions on his military machine that is engaged in a horrible war in the Congo.

The other head of state is Nelson Mandela, long-time political prisoner, now a charismatic leader guiding his nation in a relatively peaceful yet revolutionary transition to majority rule.

As president of the host country, President Robert Mugabe's appearance was expected. It seemed strange, however, to listen for close to an hour to a liberation-theology speech from the mouth of a despot.

President Mandela's visit was entirely unexpected. He came to thank the WCC specifically for its support of the struggle against white oppression. In fact, he said, "If it had not been for your (WCC) support, I would not be standing before you today."

A contentious program

Mandela was referring to the "Program to Combat Racism," by which, in the 1970s, the WCC gave financial support (for humanitarian purposes) to armed resistance movements dedicated to the overthrow of white regimes. It was the most bitterly debated program the WCC has ever launched.

Now, some two decades later, it's a strange sensation to see Nelson Mandela, a person whom many regard as a gift of God in turbulent times, and to realize that he is able to fulfil that role because of a program that many regarded as pernicious.

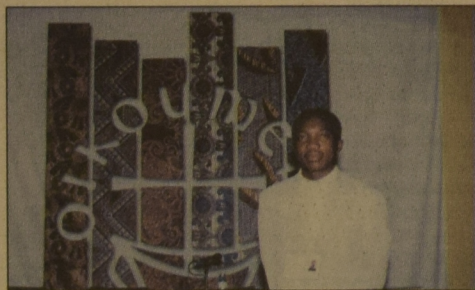
Hearing many African leaders talk about what the Program to Combat Racism had meant to them and their people, this nagging question remains with me: if the WCC had held its first assembly in 1941, as planned, and had launched a Program to Combat German Oppression, funneling financial aid to the Calvinist and Communist resistance fighters in the Netherlands and elsewhere, would there have been any controversy at all?

A Reformed witness and desire for unity

Among the churches which this Assembly approved for membership in the WCC was the Reformed Church of Christ in Nigeria, represented by its general secretary, Rev. Musa A. Manasseh, pictured here.

As noted in the document supporting its application for WCC membership, the RCCN grew out of Christian Reformed mission work, but, with about a half-million members, is far larger than the North American denomination.

The RCCN is a member of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC), as well as of the Reformed Ecumenical Council (REC). Thus, while the CRC belongs to only one of the international ecumenical organizations the REC, this grown "daughter"



(or rather, "sister") now belongs to the two larger ecumenical bodies as well.

Over breakfast I asked Pastor Manasseh whether the decision to apply for WCC membership had been a difficult one for his church. He said that his church had discussed the issue seriously since about 1992 and that a report

recommending membership was submitted in 1995. There was no strong opposition to the proposal.

The main motive for joining the WCC, he said, was the need and desire for

greater unity with Christians from other traditions and other parts of the world, in order to stand side by side with them in living out the Gospel of Jesus Christ, to learn from them and to influence them with a Reformed witness to the reign of God in Christ.

Orthodox frustration

One big story of the Harare Assembly was the relation between the Orthodox and the WCC. The Orthodox, of course, refers to the large communions on the "other side" of the divide between the Eastern and the Western (Roman Catholic) church, a division which became final in AD 1054. Many of these Eastern churches were founding members of the WCC, and much larger groups (the Russian, Romanian, Bulgarian and Polish churches) joined in 1961.

These churches are increasingly frustrated with the WCC.

The reason for these frustrations are many: differences regarding ethical issues such as homosexuality; the ordination of women; the level of Orthodox representation in the Council (25 per cent, while the baptized members of the Orthodox churches totals about half of the entire membership of the churches represented by the WCC); and the Western parliamentary style of decision making

within the WCC.

So serious are these misgivings that some Orthodox communions (the Rumanian and Georgian Orthodox churches) have terminated their WCC membership.

At the Harare Assembly, some Orthodox churches (notably the Russian) sent drastically scaled down delegations, and even of the Orthodox who were present, many did not attend the worship services or the Bible studies.

In response to the Orthodox

concerns the Assembly appointed a special commission, half of whose members are to be appointed by the Orthodox and half by the WCC. This commission will meet over the next three years to make recommendations to the WCC central committee, the body that directs the work of the WCC.

No sooner was the decision regarding this special commission taken, than the Russian Orthodox Church, the largest member church in the WCC, announced that it would terminate its participation in the central committee.

The head of the Russian delegation explained, "If we are satisfied with the work of the commission we will resume our work on the central committee. If not, our church will have to withdraw from

the WCC." Coming from the largest member church, and embodying a tradition without which the WCC would become even more "Protestant" than it already is, such withdrawal would be disastrous.

At the same time, one cannot help but wonder whether the Russian action and threat does not damage the credibility of their protest against the Western parliamentary style of WCC decision making. Is the parliamentary style not much to be preferred to strong-armed tactics of non-participation and threats of withdrawal?

Note: For more glimpses of the World Council of Churches conference, please turn to p. 23.



The poor are always with us — unfortunately

The contrast between rich and poor in Zimbabwe is stark. Not far from a sign promoting a new "lifestyle" magazine, behind a portable table, sits a young boy attempting to sell a few vegetables to help keep his family alive. He sits at the edge of a swanky neighborhood, with fancy houses surrounded by high fences, protected by dogs, badly paid black guards and electronic alarm systems.

Assembly has strongly supported the Jubilee campaign to relieve or cancel the debt of the poorest countries. How complex that can be is demonstrated in a country such as Zimbabwe. Cancelling its killer debt means letting many of the current leaders, including Mugabe, who have fleeced their people, off the hook, their Swiss bank accounts fat and safe.

Of course one does not need to travel to Africa to witness the clash between rich and poor. All one need do is walk the streets of opulent Toronto. Zimbabwe is ahead of us, in that, rather than a minority, the vast majority of its population is at the bottom of the heap.

In response to the poverty of the Third World's masses, the Harare

For this reason the Assembly called not only for debt reduction or cancellation, but for ethical governance within debtor nations, for measures to ensure that funds illegitimately transferred to secret foreign bank accounts are returned to debtor nations, and for consultations aimed at economic reform toward a just distribution of wealth and preventing new cycles of debt.

Joy conquers trauma

A smile bright enough to light up a rather large room. The ribbons and buttons she is wearing celebrate the Jubilee, the conclusion of the Ecumenical Decade of Churches in Solidarity with



Women, the 30th anniversary of the Program to Combat Racism, and a button against all violence.

But the smile could be wiped from her face instantly by a rifle butt, or her vibrant life snuffed by a bullet. For she is from the Congo, a country ravaged by a murderous war (aided and abetted by Mugabe). As one woman put it; we don't make the guns, we don't have the money to buy the guns, but we are being killed by these guns.

At one of the worship services I was standing beside a woman dressed in a beautiful blue African dress. She danced on-the-spot to the music of many of the hymns. When, towards the end of the service, I turned to her to pass the peace of Christ, she responded: "I need it; I'm from Rwanda."

Suddenly I was confronted by the horror of the massacre of nearly a million people, mainly Christians — and murdered mainly by Christians. And yet I experienced the joy that radiated from the face of the woman from war-torn Congo and pulsed through the dance of the woman from a traumatized Rwanda.

I wonder: is this contagious joy simply cultural, or has the Good News penetrated their culture so deeply that it visibly wins out over the often deadly bad news of the people's daily lives?

Yesterday I received a letter from an African woman I met at the Assembly. It begins like this: "Dear George, The joy of Jesus be with you. How are you?" And I wonder: why don't I begin letters in that way?



Church

Weather forces demolition of landmark CRC in Grand Rapids

Church once pastored by well-known theologian, famous Bible commentator faces wrecking ball

GRAND RAPIDS, MICH. (URNS) — While many churches in the Great Lakes corridor canceled services due to the severe snowstorms which struck the area in mid-January, the weather dealt a much worse blow to one of the oldest congregations in the Christian Reformed Church (CRC).

Like most area churches, Oakdale Park CRC in Grand Rapids did not hold services on January 3. On January 10, church members noticed plaster on the sanctuary floor. Suspecting weather damage, they checked the attic — and discovered that two-thirds of the roof trusses had cracked under the weight of snow. Within days, the city government ordered the church closed; neighboring streets were blocked off, nearby houses evacuated, and the congregation was given 72 hours to either repair the building or make plans to tear it down.

Engineers evaluating the situation deemed the structure beyond repair. Damage is so severe that even the landmark church's large pipe organ will have to be destroyed with the building.

"When it comes down, everything inside will be gone. To try to pull the pipes out of there is really asking to die, it's really that unstable," said Oakdale pastor Rev. William Vanden Bosch. "The plan is we are going to try to save as much as possible."

"The steeple is in the most danger, if it goes, the whole thing goes," said Vanden Bosch. "The sanctuary is tied to the steeple and we have a plan for taking down the sanctuary that involves cutting it loose from the steeple. If that works, you've saved the steeple. If it doesn't, you've got a 110-foot steeple, and it's causing a danger to the community, and will fall on homes."

Church not leaving the inner city

Two homes were evacuated immediately due to the risk of the church's collapse. When the building is torn down, a total of six houses — including the parsonage — will be evacuated. Two of those houses are currently unoccupied and are used by the church for educational purposes; a third houses Calvin Seminary students.

Despite the damage, Vanden Bosch said the church would be rebuilding at the same location. "We're committed to this neighborhood, we're committed to this ministry; we have already unanimously voted to stay on this site, and have committed to the growth of this ministry and stay for the Lord," said Vanden Bosch. "There is a sense in which this is a death-like experience, but we believe in the resurrection, we believe in grace."

Oakdale Park CRC is currently worshipping in the nearby Oakdale Christian School. Vanden Bosch said he didn't yet have complete information on the costs of demolition and rebuilding or how much of the cost would be covered by insurance, but said rebuilding could take up to a year.

Organized in 1890 and rebuilt in 1905 and 1962, Oakdale Park CRC was known for years as a bulwark of traditional Christian Reformed preaching. Four of its former pastors — Foppe Ten Hoor, P.Y. De Jong, Louis Berkhof and William Hendriksen — went on to become Calvin Seminary professors, and Berkhof and Hendriksen are known far beyond the CRC for their scholarly work: Berkhof for his systematic theology and Hendriksen for his series of Bible commentaries. Later, two arch-conservative pastors were also at Oakdale Park for a while: Y.P. De Jong and John Piersma.

The decision to stay in the church's current location wasn't easy, and has cost the church dearly over the years. Once totaling nearly 1,600 members, the building is located in the centre of what was once an ethnic Dutch neighborhood. However, neighborhood changes led to a precipitous decline in the church's membership from over 1,300 members in the 1950s until the membership stabilized at around 600 members by the 1980s. Current membership totals 510.

British clerics discuss disestablishing the Church of England

LONDON, Jan. 10 (UPI) — The *Sunday Times* of London reports that senior clerics in the Church of England have held a secret meeting with leaders of other Christian churches to discuss removing its ties to the British state. The meeting, first reported on January 10, was held with the Archbishop of Canterbury's support on Nov. 30.

Removing the church's ties to the state could eventually involve dropping the British monarch as its supreme governor and forging closer ties with other Protestant denominations. The Church of England was formed in 1533 when King Henry VIII split with the Roman Catholic Church because it refused to annul his first marriage.

After bloody struggles between some of Henry's descendants and other subsequent monarchs, some of whom were Catholic and some of whom were Protestant, since the beginning of the 18th century the British monarch has been required to be a member of the Church of England and is the church's supreme governor.

The church's bishops have seats in Parliament's House of Lords. The church's official position still holds that it will not abandon its historic role, but until now discussion of disestablishment floated only on the fringes.

Disestablishment may become more attractive for the church in the wake of British Prime Minister Tony Blair's rejection of the church's nominees for the bishopric of Liverpool and his plans to reform the House of Lords. Blair's reform plan for the House of Lords could cause many bishops to lose their seats. Some clerics fear the church's established status could be a sticking point in its efforts to build closer ties with other Protestant denominations, especially Methodists, who oppose the state's influence in the church's affairs.

Hula dance restored to Catholic Hawaiian worship

HONOLULU, Hawaii (Religion Today) — Hawaiian Catholics can dance the hula as a form of worship. The Vatican banned hula and other traditional Hawaiian dances from church last year because a congregant complained they were more like entertainment than worship. Honolulu Bishop Francis DiLorenzo appealed the ban and established guidelines, the Associated Press said.

Traditional hula uses the hands,

body and feet to communicate a story. Images of women wearing coconut, flower leis and short skirts making suggestive movements reflect a more modern version.

Hula is performed in church in the "strictest, most beautiful, spiritual sense," a hula teacher, John Lake, says.

This form of gesture is considered praying with one's whole being, DiLorenzo said. The guidelines require that gestures express praise, thanksgiving, adoration, petition and penitence before they are permitted during specific Masses. Participants are required to wear appropriate dress that respects the liturgy and congregation.

Ancient Hawaiians performed secular and religious dances before their kings. The dances have been used in all forms of Catholic services, including First Communion, weddings and funerals. Pope John Paul II has encouraged the church to search for new means to bring Christ "in the diversity of culture and human tradition."

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Church

Evangelicals compile worldwide 'church directory'

Info will help missions, Scripture translation

WAKE FOREST, N.C. (Religion Today) — Evangelicals are compiling a worldwide church directory. Six groups are co-operating in the "Churches in Habitat" project, whose goal is to identify every evangelical church in the world.

The project is co-ordinated at the Center for Great Commission Studies at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, N.C., where information is

entered in a computer database. The other partners are the Jesus Film Project, Campus Crusade for Christ, Wycliffe Bible Translators, DAWN (Discipling a Whole Nation) and the International Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, Baptist Press said.

The groups want to find out where the churches are in order to decide where new churches need to be planted, said Ed Pruitt, project administrator. The information will help mission agencies as well as Scripture-translation groups that do not have access to the gospel in their language.

Pruitt plans to visit researchers in 120 countries who are compiling information. The project already includes data on 50,000 churches in Thailand, India, Canada, Spain, Malaysia, Belgium and Guatemala.

The project will produce maps detailing locations of churches as well as describing whether groups in particular regions have access to the Scriptures or the Jesus film. The goal is to map 80 per cent of the world, excluding North America, in three years. An anonymous donor is funding the project.

Christians work to halt theft of Bibles

NAIROBI, Kenya (EP) - Christian groups in Kenya have launched a campaign to stop the theft of Bibles after the books began disappearing from schools and churches in the East African nation. Since June, some 1,000 Bibles have been taken under false pretenses from boarding schools and other Christian institutions, according to the Rev. Henry Kathii, general secretary of the Bible Society of Kenya.

Kathii told the Compass Direct news service that local press reports had "grossly exaggerated" in claiming that 10 million Bibles had been stolen and destroyed. "I don't think that the whole of Kenya has 10 million Bibles," he said.

director of the East African branch of the International Bible Society, agreed, suggesting that this organized theft of Bibles was directed against Christians in Kenya. "The racket was arrested in time, because they [the culprits] were moving only in Nairobi and, basically the problem was in Central Province and Nairobi," he said.

The Bible Society had not received any more reports of missing Bibles after the warnings were carried on local radio and in the press. "Our information through the papers and the radio has been

successful, and the church leaders have been informing their own members."

Christian officials are doing "some very, very quiet checking" into who may be responsible for the loss of the Bibles. Kathii said an on-duty policeman had released the only person caught with a fake letter. The police officer has since been suspended, but there are no other suspects in custody.

"The government is taking [the issue] very seriously because it could trigger a religious fight between the people," he asserted.

Laptops and e-mail help reach the Muslim world for Christ

COLUMBUS, Ohio (EP) — There are approximately 1.2 billion Muslims in the world, about 20.6 per cent of the world's population. The ratio of Christian missionaries to Muslims is only somewhat better than one to a million. But missionaries to the Muslim world are finding ways to be more effective — thanks to modern technology.

"The answer can be reduced to two words: electronic mail," says David Harriman, director of development for Frontiers, a mission agency to the Muslim world. "Electronic mail is the lifeline of communication for missionaries all over the world. In Muslim countries where communication is more sensitive, electronic mail is absolutely crucial."

Bible Literature International has provided laptop computers for missionaries with Frontiers. "I'm very grateful for BLI's assistance because they're making it possible for missionaries to communicate

with their home support network in ways they never before have been able to," said Harriman. "Having this kind of communication tool enables prayer information to go out that much more promptly."

BLI has also made available solar power units and transformers for missionaries who work in areas where electricity is unreliable or even unavailable.

"I think one of the things that's making such a major difference in the Muslim world now in terms of receptivity and openness is the increasing number of people who are praying," Harriman continued. "The quality of information makes it possible for people to pray in a more informed way. So as missionaries stay in touch in more complete and current ways through electronic mail and laptops and so forth, more people are praying more informed prayers for what God is doing in those situations."

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Comment

Will millennial mayhem overtake us?

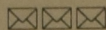
Dear Elizabeth,

I was watching a CBC special report on the Y2K problem the other day. I found something humorous in the fact that two missing digits might cause the whole system to crash: all our electronic genius subverted by one small oversight.

The report was not intended to be scare-mongering effort on the part of Canada's national broadcaster. But it really frightened me to see computer experts from Silicon Valley taking wilderness survival training courses — as if civilization were about to end and we were to revert to some tribal existence in which we would have to defend our food storage from preying neighbors. And those managers of Ontario Hydro, the banks, the government and hospitals who were interviewed gave no confident guarantees. The Hydro representative mentioned that Ontario Hydro would have the military on guard on December 31st. But isn't that just further evidence of how scared they themselves are?

"We have nothing to fear but fear itself," said FDR. I'd hate to see millennial mayhem overtake us, but what is responsible action in this situation? Are you scared?

Peter

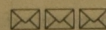


Dear Peter,

Scared? No, I'm not scared. But without truly understanding the whole Y2K computer glitch, I'm taking it seriously enough. Look at what happened in Quebec and Eastern Ontario during the ice storm of 1998. A few weeks without electricity really messes up one's life. What surprises me is that I know people who are laughing at the whole thing, thinking it ridiculous that corporations would hire Y2K specialists to guide their companies into the new millennium. I don't believe it's just media hype — this is something we need to be aware of.

But you're right. The biggest problem is fear itself, and the biggest problem with the Y2K is that nobody knows what will or won't work. So I suspect the safest route is: "Always Be Prepared." Didn't you learn that in Cadets?

Elizabeth

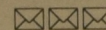


Dear Elizabeth,

Uh, no. That's the Boy Scout motto. The Cadet motto (and song) was "Living for Jesus." Unfortunately, that's too general to offer much help with this question. But I think "Be prepared," like "Be responsible," can easily fit into a life lived for Jesus. He did say, "Don't worry about tomorrow," which, while precluding anxiety and paranoia, does not preclude prudent anticipation.

We should go beyond being prepared, though. We need to develop an attitude that will not allow us to slide into self-preservation mode. There is a tendency to think first of yourself — or of you and your family — rather than the needs of your neighbors, and especially those who are poor and vulnerable. Tough times could really rip us apart — or bring us much closer together, depending on our approach.

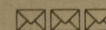
Peter



Peter,

Well, sure. Of course we ought to be looking out for our neighbor — at any time, not just in emergency situations. But I see the Canadian Armed Forces as our Boy Scouts these days, as evident in last year's ice storm, the Red River floods of 1997, and, um, Toronto's "storm of the century" last month. I don't think calling in the military necessarily means we are at war. Do you really think people are assuming that if our technology is taken away from us, we will immediately regress to some lower, more animalistic form of humanity? (Do you?)

Elizabeth

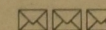


Elizabeth,

Well, I did notice that the heavy snow fall last week helped neighbors get to know one another. I even stopped to help someone who drove off the road. It was almost an automatic reaction — you don't really pause to weigh the advantages and disadvantages of helping when you watch someone drive off the road into a snowbank.

But it could go the opposite way, too. This CBC program featured some computer analysts who were learning self-defense in preparation for Y2K — more specifically, how to crush the nose of someone who is threatening your food supply. The mall parking lot scene at Christmas is still fresh in my mind, too, and that's more than enough to remind me of just how base we all can be. And that's at a time of plenty (for most).

Peter



Two under 35



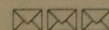
Peter Schuurman

Elizabeth Salomons

P.,

Computer analysts learning self-defense to protect their food supply sounds like scare-mongering to me.

E.

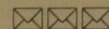


Elizabeth,

I don't think so. The fact is, nobody is exactly sure what is going to happen, and CBC showed the full range of responses to this uncertainty in a very matter-of-fact manner. It might have been irresponsible to neglect the worst-case scenario.

Regardless of what happens, what this event will make clear, I hope, is how incredibly dependent we have become on technology in every aspect of our lives. Technology has eclipsed nature, God, and humanity itself as the largest force looming on the horizon of our lives. Maybe this will help us put it in perspective, and in its proper place. What exactly that perspective and place is, that's a whole other treatise. Suffice to say it involves a much less exalted role in our lives and future.

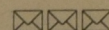
Peter



Peter,

I'm not sure what you're getting at. Do you think the Y2K problem could serve as a badly needed wake-up call? Is there a fundamental problem with our dependence on technology that you think might be fixed?

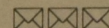
Elizabeth



E.,

Yes, especially in North America. Don't you think so?

P.



Peter,

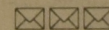
I guess not, when I'm really forced to think about it. I don't think our dependence on pacemakers and telephones and jet planes is going to be the downfall of our civilization. I guess that means I'm also saying I don't agree with you about technology having eclipsed nature, God and humanity.

Maybe I'm missing the boat here, maybe this is blind, rather naive faith, but although I think there's probably going to be a lot of headaches and some near-disaster crises at the turn of the century, I have faith that it'll all work out and the glitches will be smoothed over and eventually our lives will go on as before.

This is all probably rather North-American-centric as well, as if we are immune to disaster of life-threatening proportions. Famine and war are so far removed from my reality that I have a hard time imagining how I'd react in such a situation.

Jesus said, "Don't worry," and told us to look at the little birds as examples of how we should live. It sounds foolish. But it's still the credo I live by.

Elizabeth



Elizabeth,

It may not be the end of the world, but it might be the end of more than just a millennium. And I hope it will be the beginning of some wonderful, new, unforeseen things that make this planet a better place to live.

Peter

Nose for News



Bert Hielema

ple farmed in a creationally responsible way; that's why so many hands were needed. Today only 1.7 per cent are in agriculture, all done with big machines, using often more calories in fuel than they produce in foodstuffs.

A century ago services, such jobs as retailing, teaching, any white collar occupation, kept 33 per cent of the Western world busy. Today this has more than doubled to 68 per cent. This makes the job market vulnerable to massive restructuring — the current word for cutting jobs.

Suppose that the pundits are right and most people will begin to buy online. This will curtail retail selling and depreciate shopping centre values. What do we do with the 20 per cent of the population who work in such places?

THE EURO, THE NEW currency in Europe went into effect on the first of the new year, with great benefits for the large corporations and also for the travellers: the need for money changing has been eliminated. Expectations are that competition will increase, which usually means jobs will be lost as businesses merge to realize savings. This goes against the aims of the socialist governments in Germany and France, which have won their recent elections on job creation.

The head of the European Central Bank, Dutchman Wim Duisenberg, will be the man to watch this year. His aim will be to keep the Euro strong and competitive with the dollar, while the politicians want new jobs. This has the makings of a classic confrontation: politicians vs. central bankers and tight finance ministers: the Paul Martins and Alan Greenspans versus the pork barrel politicians.

ON A CHEERFUL NOTE: The number of bottles of champagne stored in the French cellars is one billion, enough to ensure that there will be no shortage for millennium celebrations. Cheers! A lot of people won't be allowed to drink at that time: armies and police everywhere in the Western world will be on full alert because nobody can predict what will happen then. At no time in history has a population entered a new year with more trepidation.

Leave it to the Chinese govern-

ment to be radical: in order to ensure that airplanes will be free of the millennium bug, the authorities have ordered the people responsible for correcting the computer systems to fly on these planes on the night of December 31, 1999. The technicians' lives are on the line. Both KLM and Lufthansa have suspended all flights on that fateful night.

I LOVE STATISTICS. This is what I found in a recent issue of *Fortune*: In South Korea, 61 per cent of men smoke and 11 per cent of women, for an average of 36 per cent. In the Netherlands, 53.2 per cent of men smoke and 46.8 per cent of women, the highest average in the entire world. In France more men smoke: 55.7 per cent, but fewer women: 43.1 per cent. Contrast this to the U.S. and Canada, where 26 per cent of men are puffers and 24 per cent of women are. Sweden has an even lower rate, the lowest for both: each 21 per cent.

ENVIRONMENTAL concerns seem unlikely to turn humans against the automobile in spite of the carnage that invention brings. Each year close to one million people around the world die from auto accidents, about 2,500 each day. Death rates are rising especially rapidly in developing countries, where cars are still a new thing and many motorists have received little or no training. Although India has only a few drivers, it suffers 65,000 road deaths a year.

Fortunately we in North America rank among the safest drivers in the world, but still some 45,000 people are killed here each year. Europe has a slightly higher number, about 55,000.

Picture the uproar if the airplanes were killing that many people: worldwide 10 jets would have to fall from the skies every single day. But since cars are part of our life, we accept the death toll as an inescapable fact of life.

HERE IS SOMETHING you may want to consider if you have moving plans: residents in Brookville, Alabama, want to form a town based on Christian ideals. The 140 people there say they want the King James Bible as the town's

charter and the Ten Commandments as its ordinances, with no elected officials. Interesting. I seem to remember that the people of Old Israel, 3000 years ago, tried that too. The experiment was not very successful, if I read my Old Testament correctly.

I READ AN INTRIGUING little paragraph about light and cancer. Blind people apparently have a 70 per cent lower cancer rate. Researchers think that light at night, while we sleep, causes cancer in humans. So, as a precaution, do away with that little nightlight in your bedroom and sleep in natural darkness as much as possible.

IN MONTREAL THERE are 300 Roman Catholic churches, built in an era when the Mass was as popular as the Internet is now. Today 90 per cent of those churches are no longer in use. In a period of 50 years, Quebec has swung from a very religious society to the most secular region of Canada, with the lowest charitable giving, the highest rate of smoking and the highest number of out-of-wedlock births.

Even the anger against the church, so evident some 25 years ago, has now become total indifference towards religion. Where at one time Quebec sent out missionaries all over the world, now African priests are hired to staff some of the few churches that are still functioning.

Bert Hielema enjoyed the snow fall and made good use of the ski trails in the area. He lives in Tweed, Ont.

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WELL, HERE WE ARE, a month or so into the New Year, and already records have been broken: both have to do with snow: maximum snowfall in Toronto paralyzes city and maximum snow job in Washington paralyzes government. The accusers of Clinton are grossly exaggerating his conduct, even though Clinton does warrant the Villain of the Year award.

SPEAKING OF AWARDS, even this early in the year one institution is already in line for the Loser of the Year medal. I'm referring to the International Monetary Fund (IMF). When the economies of South Korea, Thailand and Indonesia took a dive the IMF stepped in and prescribed radical medicine, which, instead of improving the situation, made it worse, causing inflation, public unrest, riots, deaths. Just imagine, the cream of the economic elite, all PhDs from the best universities in the world, met and deliberated. And what they dictated to these countries as a cure failed miserably.

Billions of dollars were poured into Indonesia, most of which were just as quickly siphoned off into the bank accounts of the controlling elite. Exactly the same happened in Russia, where the criminal elements ran away with the so-called economic rescue package, because there 70 per cent of the economy is controlled by criminals. South Korea, which has no social infrastructure, such as unemployment insurance and severance pay, saw its unemployment double, forcing families to leave their children at orphanages, and driving thousands to despair.

And now Brazil, which just has received \$41.5 billion from this fund, promptly saw its currency experience that sinking feeling. In my lay opinion, we should start suing the economists for malpractice. Perhaps the irrational stock markets will take care of that.

I'LL SINGLE OUT two companies for showing the irrationality of the markets. One is called America Online. It has 10,000 employees and sales of less than \$1 billion (US). Yet the stock market value of this company is more than General Motors, which has 600,000 employees and sales of \$180 billion (US).

Another is Amazon.com, an Internet company which sells books and music; its shares sold last year for as low as \$9 each and now trade for \$150, a ridiculous market value, because it has never made a nickel in profit.

With the stock market so high, we, in Canada and the U.S. have been dipping into our savings and have gone deeper and deeper into debt to buy the junk that the world produces. There will come a time when the mood swings towards saving money and then the buck will stop, which is even more scary because that will mean recession.

So we are caught in a Catch 22: when we spend, we pollute beyond reason, as our present way of life can be blamed directly for the floods, the droughts and the hurricanes which have made 1998 the most catastrophic year of the century, with insurance claims last year higher than in all the 1980s. When we stop buying, bad times come. Take your pick.

A GOOD NEWS ITEM: Jubilee 2000, a debt-cancellation program for poor nations, is gaining support. Germany has announced that it will support the program at the next G7 conference in Cologne. Canada, Germany, France, England, Italy, the U.S. and Japan are members of this club. Write your MP or Congress member to support this.

THIS CENTURY HAS been one of change. I will single out two factors in the economy: farming and services. One hundred years ago, 20.6 per cent of the people made a living on farms. These peo-

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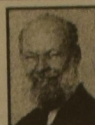


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Classifieds

Classified Rates	Birthdays	Anniversaries	Obituaries	Obituaries
<p>(Revised February 1, 1995)</p> <p>Births \$25.00</p> <p>Marriages and Engagements \$40.00</p> <p>Anniversaries \$45.00</p> <p>2-column anniversaries \$90</p> <p>Obituaries \$45.00</p> <p>Notes of thanks \$35.00</p> <p>Birthdays \$40.00</p> <p>All other one-column classified advertisements: \$15.00 per column inch.</p> <p>NOTE: Minimum fee is \$15.00. Letter under file number \$35.00 extra.</p> <p>Photos: \$25.00 additional charge.</p> <p>All rates are GST inclusive.</p> <p>Ads must be in by Tuesdays, 8:30 a.m., 9 business days prior to publication date.</p> <p>ATTENTION!</p> <p>a) <i>Christian Courier</i> reserves the right to print classifieds using our usual format.</p> <p>b) A sheet with information about an obituary sent by funeral homes is not acceptable.</p> <p>c) Photographs sent by fax are not acceptable. Please send original photos.</p> <p>d) <i>Christian Courier</i> will not be responsible for any errors due to handwritten or phoned-in advertisements.</p> <p>e) The rate shown above for classifieds covers any length up to five column inches. <i>Christian Courier</i> reserves the right to charge for additional column inches at the rate of \$15.00 per column inch (GST incl.).</p> <p>NEWLYWEDS & NEW PARENTS</p> <p>We offer a one-year subscription for only \$25.00 (GST incl.) to the couples whose wedding is announced in the <i>Christian Courier</i> and to the parents of the child whose birth announcement appears in our paper. Please enclose \$25.00 and the couple's correct address.</p> <p>Christian Courier 4-261 Martindale Rd. St. Catharines, ON L2W 1A1 Phone: (905) 682-8311 Fax: (905) 682-8313</p> <p>Our new e-mail address: ccadpromo@aol.com</p>	<p>BROER:</p>  <p><i>Congratulations to Mrs. Nancy Broer on her 90th birthday!</i></p> <p>90th Birthday</p> <p>MRS. NANCY BROER</p> <p>will celebrate her 90th birthday on Feb. 16, 1999, the Lord willing. Mother immigrated to Canada from Andijk, the Neth., in 1948, and is a charter member of the Aylmer Chr. Ref. Church. She is an avid reader and enjoys crocheting.</p> <p>May God continue to bless you, Mother, as He has in the past. With love from your seven children, 28 grandchildren and 44 great-grandchildren.</p> <p>Address: #23-110 Caverly Road, Aylmer, ON N5H 2P4</p> <p>KLOOSTERMAN:</p> <p>80th Birthday</p> <p>With a thankful heart</p> <p>HARMEN (HERMAN) KLOOSTERMAN</p> <p>will celebrate his 80th birthday on Feb. 11, 1999, D.V.</p> <p>Home address: 400 Dominion St., Apt. 141, Strathroy, ON N7G 3G8</p> <p>Phone: (519) 245-7393</p> <p>Births</p> <p>BRUINSMA:</p> <p>Rick and Marianne of St. Catharines, Ont., thank God for the safe arrival of</p> <p>DAVID KYLE</p> <p>on Jan. 6, 1999, weighing 6lbs., 3 oz.</p> <p>First grandchild for Sid and Mona Bruinsma of Goderich, Ont., and first grandson for Richard and Helena VanderWal of Acton, Ont.</p> <p>A great-grandson for Willy Boer of Cottam, Ont., and Barbara Pot of Whitby, Ont.</p> <p>EGGENGOOR/VISSER:</p> <p>With awe and thanksgiving to God for his miraculous gift, we, Ed and Evelyn Eggengoor, joyfully announce the birth of healthy twin grandsons</p> <p>RANE PETER (6 lbs., 9 oz.)</p> <p>and</p> <p>JARED EVERT (5 lbs., 11 oz.)</p> <p>born to Mark and Annette Eggengoor on Jan. 10, 1999, in Brampton, Ont.</p> <p>Two brothers for Kira. Grandparents Peter and Martha Visser. Great-grandparents, Mr. and Mrs. G. Eggengoor, Mr. and Mrs. M. Maas, Mrs. E. Visser and Mrs. M. Vanhelden.</p> <p>Twins' address: 12179 Heart Lake Rd., R.R. 4, Brampton, ON L6T 3S1</p>	<p>Buitenpost Waterford Fr., the Neth. Ont. 1944 January 27 1999</p> <p>55th Anniversary</p> <p>LUIT and FRE MIEDEMA</p> <p>"Sons are a heritage from the Lord, children a reward from Him... Blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them" (Ps. 127:3-5).</p> <p>Congratulations Mem and Heit! Pake and Beppe!</p> <p>The words of your chosen wedding text have certainly been fulfilled.</p> <p>The Lord has truly blessed you. We, your children, 46 grandchildren and nine great-grandchildren thank the Lord for all the years He has given you to each other and to us.</p> <p>Thank you Lord, for the great fellowship we may enjoy together as a family.</p> <p>With love from your children:</p> <p>Ankje & Jack Bootsma Wayne, Leonard & Tanya (Zachary), Timothy & Andrea, Faye, Sara, Aimee Doug & Sue Miedema Steven & Helen (Keith, Stephanie, Sabrina, Cody), Lori & Kevin (Kyle), Jeff & Kim (Victoria, Dylan), Shane Ann & John Racher Adrienne, Phillip, Melody, Lindsay George (+) Joyce & Hanspeter Werder Daniel, Joy, Jeremy, Peter, Jordan, Jolene, Monique, Travis Davis & Trudy Miedema Ryan, Joel & Halima, Kristen, Aaron, Eden, Joshua, Willy Ettie & Ed Wybenga Angela & Jim, Tara (Megan), Peter & Laurie, Adam Leo & Ann Miedema Matthew, Bradley, Brent, Leah, Gregory John & Audrey Miedema Brandy, Lucas, Brittany Mary & Ralph VanBenthem Melissa, Cassandra, Michael, Dennis Jenny & Brian Veldhuis Justine, Tyler, Amber Lloyd & Tammy Miedema Cassandra, Christopher, Shaun, Joshua</p> <p>Open house was held on Jan. 30, 1999.</p> <p>Address: Luit and Fre Miedema, R.R. #5, Waterford, ON N0E 1Y0</p> <p>Teachers</p> <p>KITCHENER, Ont.: Laurentian Hills Chr. School, located in beautiful, centrally located Kitchener, Ont., invites applications for a possible position in the upper elementary level. LHCS has grown to 200+ students, a staff of 12 full- and part-time teachers, and will be adding a new primary wing to its facilities this spring. Applicants need to be qualified teachers who demonstrate a love for God, a love for senior students and love for teaching. Please direct all inquiries and resumes identifying specific strengths and interests to:</p> <p>Luke Janassen, Principal Laurentian Hills Chr. School 11 Laurentian Dr. Kitchener, ON N2E 1C1</p>	<p>Smilde, Gr. Addison the Neth. Ont. Oct. 9, 1924 - Jan. 5, 1999</p> <p>Psalm 121</p> <p>On Tuesday, Jan. 5, 1999, the Lord called home into his eternal glory, our dear husband, father, grandfather and brother,</p> <p>KLAAS DIJKEMA</p> <p>Beloved husband of Boukje (Bonnie) Schaafsma and the late Evelyn DeSchiffart.</p> <p>Dear father of:</p> <p>Richard Dijkema (Ineke, nee Bos) — Brockville, Ont. Gerald Dijkema (Lisa, nee Bos) — Tincap, Ont. Clarence Dijkema (Jane) — Athens, Ont. Sid Dijkema (Cindy) — Athens, Ont. Elske McArthur (Andy) — Brockville, Ont.</p> <p>Cathy Dekroon (Steven) — Lansdowne, Ont.</p> <p>Stepfather of:</p> <p>Audrey Bos — Brockville, Ont. Frank Bos (Joanne) — Athens, Ont. Ineke Dijkema — Cornwall, Ont. Lisa Dijkema — Cornwall, Ont. Sylvia Bos (Danny) — Cornwall, Ont. Andy Bos (Michelle) — Brockville, Ont.</p> <p>Sadly missed by 31 grandchildren.</p> <p>Brother of Albartus Dijkema of the Neth., Simon Dijkema (Boukje) of Beamsville, Ont., and Martje Bouwers (Fred) of Winchester, Ont.. Also survived by his mother-in-law, Clara DeSchiffart, of Brockville, Ont. Predeceased by two brothers and one sister, Reint, Pieter and Jantje Dijkema, all of the Neth.</p> <p>Funeral service was held at Athens Chr. Ref. Church, Athens, Ont.</p> <p>Correspondence address: Bonnie Dijkema, R.R. #1, Addison, ON K0E 1A0</p> <p>TERESA ROSEBOOM</p> <p>died very suddenly and too soon at McMaster Hospital, Hamilton, Ont., on Thursday, Jan. 7, 1999, at the age of 37 years.</p> <p>Beloved wife and best friend of Tony Roseboom, Port Colborne, Ont.</p> <p>Dear mommy of Kristal.</p> <p>Loving daughter of Marjorie and David Jolliffe of Crystal Beach, Ont.</p> <p>Sister of Marjorie (Mark) Cybulski, Crystal Beach, Ont.</p> <p>Daughter-in-law of John and Aaltje Roseboom, Welland, Ont.</p> <p>Sister-in-law of John, Ray, Jack, Lloyd and Gary Roseboom, Hennie Koolhaas, Grace Vitols and Elly Gallinger.</p> <p>Dear granddaughter of Dora Smith, Crystal Beach, Ont.</p> <p>Teresa is survived by many nieces and nephews.</p> <p>Teresa battled Lupus since the age of 12. <i>She fought the good fight.</i></p> <p>She was a member of Central United Church and T.O.P.S. club.</p> <p>Funeral service was held on Monday, Jan. 11, 1999, in the Armstrong Chapel, Rev. Roger Hides officiating. Cremation followed.</p> <p>Donations to the Lupus Foundation would be greatly appreciated.</p>	<p>'s Gravenzande Welland the Neth. Ont. May 26, 1924 - Jan. 8, 1999</p> <p>Psalm 121</p> <p>On the morning of Jan. 8, 1999, the Lord, in His time, called home His child</p> <p>GERRIT VERMEER</p> <p>in his 75th year. Though he has completed his earthly journey, he will be sadly missed by those who remain.</p> <p>Beloved husband of Nell Vermeer.</p> <p>Loving father and father-in-law of: Margaret & Bert Boverhof — Wellandport, Ont. Sid Bakker — Fonthill, Ont. Karin Vermeer — Fonthill, Ont. Gerry & Cynthia Vermeer — Welland, Ont.</p> <p>Lorraine & Bret Otte — Beaver Falls, Pa.</p> <p>Dearest Opa of grandchildren: Mark & Kristina, Andrea, Ryan, Reuben, Jessica, Alison, Ginelle, Karina, Stephanie, Gerrit, Shannon, Andre, Jacob & Brenna.</p> <p>Great-grandfather of Ashleigh and Orion.</p> <p>Gerrit was predeceased by his daughter Irene Bakker (1993), and several brothers and sisters. He will be lovingly remembered by the family he held so dear, as well as by friends in Canada and in the Netherlands.</p> <p>Correspondence address: Nell Vermeer, 684 South Pelham St., Welland, ON L3C 3C8</p> <p>Miscellaneous</p> <p>Will & Estate Planning can help BIBLE DISTRIBUTION</p> <p>For complete information call or write:</p> <p>THE BIBLE LEAGUE P.O. Box 5037 Burlington, ON L7R 3Y8 Tel.: (905) 319-9500 Fax: (905) 319-0484</p> <p>The Living Word Sermons for reading services.</p> <p>CRC Contact: R. Vander Ploeg Secr./Treas. 37 Brick Pond Lane Woodstock, ON N4V 1G1 Phone: (519) 539-2117</p> <p>EH JJ SHOW</p> <p>Christian TV Entertainment</p> <p>Times: Vision TV Cable Network Thursday mornings 6:30 a.m. ET & PT 7:30 a.m. MT & AT</p> <p>Also CJIL-TV (The Miracle Channel) Lethbridge, Alberta 9:30 a.m. and a repeat in evening Sponsored by Voortman Cookies Web page: www.ehjjshow.com</p>
<p>Thanks</p> <p>FLIM:</p> <p>I would like to thank all my family and friends for attending the open house for my 100th birthday. The visits, flowers, cards, phone calls and all the well wishes were much appreciated. I had a wonderful birthday. God is very good to me!</p> <p>G.H. Flim, 14 Canadian Oaks Drive, Whitby, ON L1N 6W8</p>	<p>Personal</p> <p>Retired Dutch Canadian widower, 63, United Reformed, would like to meet Christian lady, southern Ontario. Please send letters to File #2687, c/o <i>Christian Courier</i>, 4-261 Martindale Rd., St. Catharines, ON L2W 1A1.</p>			

Classifieds

Teachers	Teachers	Job Opportunities	Anniversaries
<p>BARRIE, Ont.: Timothy Chr. School is soliciting resumes for possible teaching positions opening in senior elementary with a need for expertise in computers, lower primary with preference given to educators trained in F.S.L. and a definite part-time position in special education. If you are interested in becoming part of a collegial, growing staff and have a passion for sharing your faith with children, please direct your resume to:</p> <p>Mrs. Jane Tjeerdsma c/o Timothy Chr. School 49 Ferris Lane Barrie, ON L4M 2Y1 Phone: (705) 726-6621 Fax: (705) 726-8571</p> <p>Only plausible candidates will be contacted. This application period will close on March 5, 1999.</p>	<p>VANCOUVER, B.C.: Vancouver Chr. School, a denominationally diverse community which offers Kindergarten through Grade 10, will have an opening for a Grade 9 and 10 Humanities position for the 1999/2000 school year. Deadline for replies is March 15. Please send your resume to:</p> <p>Ellen Freestone, Acting Principal Vancouver Chr. School 3496 Mons Drive Vancouver, BC V5M 3E6 No applications by fax, please.</p>	<p>Timothy Christian School (Toronto) is seeking applications for the definite position of PRINCIPAL beginning September 1, 1999</p> <p>Our school of 196 ethnically diverse students (K-8) was established in 1958 and is situated in northwest Toronto. If you are interested in working with a dedicated staff of 13 and being supported by a committed Christian school community, we invite you to apply for this position. We look forward to assisting you in using your talents and gifts in our school to help prepare God's children for service in his kingdom. Please send your resume, a statement of faith, and your philosophy of education to:</p> <p>Principal Search Committee Timothy Christian School 28 Elmhurst Drive, Rexdale, ON M9W 2J5 Inquiries may be made by phoning Mr. William Groot (416) 743-2554 or e-mailing Mr. Jeff de Walle at jdewalle@andec.on.ca</p>	<p>1949 February 17 1999 On Feb. 20, 1999, we will be celebrating our parents' JOHN and MARION SLIK 50th wedding anniversary. We thank God for giving them all these years together. Congratulations Dad and Mom, from your children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren: Ben & Marjo Merkus — Kitchener, Ont. Tony, Marty & Tammy (Kevin), Jeff & Anneliese (Xavier) Peter Slik — Calgary, Alta. Lyn & Dwayne, Lisa (Austin), John Nick Slik — Calgary, Alta. Emil Slik — Calgary, Alta. An open house will be held on Feb. 20, 1999, from 2-4 p.m., at the Community Chr. Ref. Church, 1275 Bleams Road, Kitchener, Ont. Best wishes only. Address: 78 Falesy Ave., Kitchener, ON N2A 1N9 Phone: (519) 894-8917</p>
<p>MAPLE RIDGE, B.C.: Haney-Pitt Meadows Chr. School is now inviting candidates to apply for a full-time secondary position beginning in Sept. 1999. Previous teaching experience and strengths in science, physical education, humanities or the fine arts would be an asset. Qualified part-time applicants in the mentioned areas of expertise would be welcomed.</p> <p>Join an energetic, young Middle/High School team in a well-established Christian school. Haney-Pitt Meadows Chr. School is located 45 min. east of Vancouver in the city of Maple Ridge.</p> <p>Send resumes to:</p> <p>Mr. Rod Berg, Principal Haney-Pitt Meadows Chr. School 12140 203rd Street Maple Ridge, BC V2X 4V5</p>	<p>Personal</p> <p>ONE TO ANOTHER Christian companion magazine. Hundreds of readers Canada-wide. Single issue \$5. Write to: #12 923 2nd Ave. S. Lethbridge, AB T1J 0C7</p>	<p></p> <p>Teaching Principal Immanuel Christian High School In sunny Lethbridge, Alta.</p> <p>We are seeking a leader with a commitment to Jesus Christ for an interdenominational 7-12 school with an enrolment of 300 students, beginning September 1999. Applicants should have an enthusiasm for the Reformed vision of Christian education and have administrative and team-building abilities. If you would like to join our dynamic three-campus society in providing high-quality Christian education, please reply to:</p> <p>Mr. Louie Tams 4606 - 60th Avenue, Taber, AB T1G 1H9 Phone: (403) 223-4582/Fax: (403) 223-2599</p>	<p></p> <p>Op 29 januari, 1999, was het 55 jaar geleden dat onze ouders en grootouders J. IDSERDA en J. IDSERDA-KIN in het huwelijk zijn getreden. Om gezondheidsredenen werd het feest gevierd in de familiekring. Evert -- Kitchener, Ont. Trudy & Peter Osinga -- Kitchener, Ont. Peter & Barb -- London, Ont. Chris & Lisa -- Halifax, N.S. Kim & Rick Dykstra -- London, Ont.</p> <p>Address: Holland Chr. Homes, 7900 McLaughlin Rd. S., Prov. T. #1105, Brampton, ON L6Y 5A7</p>
<p>METCALFE, Ont.: Community Chr. School (1/2 hour south of Ottawa) requires one full-time and one part-time teacher for the 1999-2000 school year to replace teachers on leave. Please contact:</p> <p>Beth Ripmeester, Principal Phone/Fax: (613) 821-3669 Resume, statement of faith/philosophy of education may be sent to: 2681 Glen St. Metcalfe, ON K0A 2P0</p>	<p>Christian patriot: farmer's background, well educated, traveled; passion for history, concern for the future; Seeks mature yet open-minded lady, 30-45, outdoors type. Gen. 2:23, 25; Job 8:7-9. Picture, confidential. P.O. Box 95003, Stouffville, ON L4A 1J1</p>	<p>CONSTRUCTION</p> <p>CONSTRUCTION COORDINATOR (MECHANICAL)</p> <p>Pro Electric Inc. is a leading mechanical and electrical contractor in London, Ontario. We are known in South Western Ontario for the quality of our service and the quality of our people.</p>	<p></p>
<p>PRINCIPAL</p> <p>PORT PERRY, Ont.: Scugog Chr. School is searching for a teaching principal to lead an interdenominational school. The school has a present enrolment of 77 students from JK-8 with 35 families and is situated in an exceptional community. Job commences Aug. 1 1999. Send your resume, with a statement of faith and your philosophy of education, to:</p> <p>Principal Search Committee Scugog Chr. School P.O. Box 3308 Prince Albert, ON L9L 1C3 For info. call Mike McLaren at (905) 985-0948 (work)</p>	<p>Bed & Breakfast</p> <p>Bed & Breakfast in Holland</p> <p>Book your holiday at a farm house on the beautiful island of Schouwen Duiveland, Zeeland, the Neth. Close to the Delta-works. Pension, apartments and camping-site. Fam. Passchier-Boot Lockershofweg 7 4326 SE Noordwille The Netherlands Ph.: 011-31-111-462398</p>	<p>We are currently seeking an individual to coordinate mechanical and electrical projects as they move through the various stages from successful bidding to final completion. This position will work in concert with our site foremen as well as our estimating and production staff.</p> <p>The ideal applicant will be a journeyman plumber or have post secondary school credentials, a proven record as foreman or coordinator, and good interpersonal skills.</p> <p>All responses will be treated confidentially.</p> <p>Reply to: C. Crockett, Pro Electric Inc., 347 Sovereign Road, London, Ontario N6M 1A6 Fax: 451-1707 No agencies please.</p> <p>London: A Great Place To Live</p>	<p>Teachers</p> <p>OAKVILLE, Ont.: Due to expansion, John Knox Chr. School, is accepting applications for possible primary and/or junior positions, including Kindergarten for the 1999-2000 school year. We are seeking candidates with ability to integrate computers into curriculum. Experience in teaching music is an asset. Please forward a resume, including a philosophy of Christian education and stating grade or level preference to:</p> <p>Mrs. L. Keith, Principal John Knox Chr. School 2232 Sheridan Garden Drive Oakville, ON L6J 7T1</p>
	<p>Miscellaneous</p> <p>Flights</p> <p> DCA Travel SERVICE INC.</p> <p>Canada wide 1-800-667-2525 TORONTO 416-224-5211 BRADFORD 905-775-6763 E-mail: dca_travel@compuserve.com Emergency Service Available Business & Vacation Travel Worldwide! Martinair - KLM - vacation</p> <p>Cruises & Packages Head Office</p>		

Classifieds/Events

Job Opportunities

PASTOR

Houston Chr. Ref. Church in beautiful northwest British Columbia is seeking a full-time pastor to provide sound biblical preaching, ministry to youth and pastoral care. The church membership stands at 67 families; which translates into 169 professing members and 154 non-professing or baptized members. Please send a copy of your profile. A church profile is available upon request. For more information please contact: Rick Delau, Search Committee, Houston Chr. Ref. Church, Box 6, Houston, BC V0J 1Z0. Phone: (250) 845-7756/Fax: (250) 845-7578.

Small Contract Ministry Position

Fellowship Christian Reformed Church of Edmonton, Alta., is looking for a person to do effective preaching approximately 24 times per year. The position includes some standard ministry functions and spiritual counselling. Fellowship is a lay-directed congregation with much involvement from its approximately 190 members. In our attempt to live our faith we struggle with issues of community, social justice and inclusivity. For information about the church and a position description please contact the Pastoral Committee c/o Jim Choles phone: 780-455-4812; 14432-110 Ave. Edm, Alta T5N 1J4; e-mail: jcholes@env.gov.ab.ca.

Christian Schools International
District 11

serving Alberta, Saskatchewan & Manitoba, seeks applications for the full-time position of

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Regular travel is required. The position will commence August 1, 1999. Salary is commensurate with experience. Applications will be taken until February 19, 1999. Please direct applications and inquiries to:

Christian Schools International, District 11
c/o Ms. Florene Woudstra, Executive Assistant
9125 - 50 Street, Edmonton, AB T6B 2H3
Phone: (780) 469-9653 Fax: (780) 469-9880
e-mail: csi@kingsu.ab.ca

Events

The Woodstock Dutch Theatre Group Presents

Er Loopt Een Streepje Door

Een klucht in drie bedrijven door
Berend en Rob Heemskerk

Woodstock: Market Centre Theatre
March 11 and 12, 8 p.m., advance tickets only.
Drayton: Festival Theatre
March 20, 7:30 p.m., tickets at the theatre.
London: Dutch Canadian Hall
March 26 and 27, 8 p.m., tickets at Mike's Deli.
Beamsville: Great Lakes Christian College
April 10, 7:30 p.m.

All tickets \$10 in advance or at the door. For advance tickets send stamped self-addressed envelope with your order to Adrian Rodenburg, R.R. #4, Thamesford, ON N0M 2M0, (519) 283-6285.

9th Annual Coffee Break/Story Hour Inspirational Rally
Saturday, April 10, 1999, at the People's Church, Toronto, Ont.

All women are invited to attend. Please invite an unchurched neighbour or friend to come with you to the Faith Challenge Rally.

Stephanie Fast, well-known international speaker, will address us on the theme

CREATED FOR DESTINY

based on Psalm 139:16. You will be touched by her story of God's healing love and enduring faithfulness.

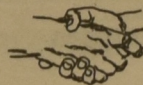
The Belleville Praise Team will lead us in singing. Cost is \$20.00 including lunch and refreshments. Registration forms are available from any Coffee Break Director or contact Ellen Hessels, 20 Hartford Trail, Brampton, ON L6W 4G5 Phone (905) 457-7490.

Registration deadline: March 12, 1999.

Family Outreach Ontario
Community Alcohol Abuse Help Group

The Board of F.O.O. is pleased to announce our new
Co-ordinator Rick Jongejan
Rick can be reached by phone (905) 563-1DAY (1329)
by fax (905) 563-WORD (9673)
by E-mail: family@vaxxine.com
Address 4002 Hixon St.
Beamsville, ON L0R 1B7

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CONCERT

"Times of Refreshing"

Salem Mental Health Association is proud to present recording artist

Peter Tigchelaar.

Come and enjoy an evening of worship and spiritual renewal.
Bring a friend.

Saturday, February 13, 1999, at 7:00 pm
Immanuel Christian Reformed Church, Hamilton
61 Mohawk Rd. W. (corner W. 5th and Mohawk)

Admission is free; a freewill offering will be taken on behalf of Salem.
For more information, call Desmond Wall at (905) 544-0197.

Teachers

ANCASTER, Ont.: Hamilton District Chr. High School, requires a part-time teacher to instruct two Grade 9 French classes for a maternity leave position that will begin March 22, 1999. Please reply in writing to:

Hamilton Distr. Chr. High School
Mr. Jim Vanderkooy, Principal
92 Glanaster Road
Ancaster, ON L9G 3K9
Fax: (905) 648-6655

JARVIS, Ont.: Jarvis District Chr. School is in need of a Grade 5 teacher, effective March 22, 1999 through to June 30, 1999. This position will likely continue for the 1999-2000 school year as well. Strengths/interests particularly in the areas of Computer and French would be welcomed, but not necessarily required. Please send your letter of application, resume and other pertinent materials as soon as possible to:

Garry Glasbergen, Principal
Jarvis District Christian School
P.O. Box 520
Jarvis, ON N0A 1J0
School phone: (519) 587-4444
School fax: (519) 587-2985
Home phone: (905) 765-7919

Job Opportunities

The Christian Counselling Centre in St. Thomas, Ont., an agency which has provided family, marriage and individual counselling in southwestern Ontario since 1990, invites applications for the position of Counsellor and Executive Director to begin work in May 1999. Qualifications: A Masters Degree in Social Work or its equivalent; a member in good standing in a Reformed church; willingness to travel. Please send your resume, transcripts and a one-page statement of philosophy on Christian counselling by March 31, 1999, to:

Christian Counselling Centre
15 St. Catharine Street
St. Thomas, ON N5P 2V7

All correspondence will be kept strictly confidential.

Southern Ontario Poultry Equipment dealer has one full-time position available for their installation and service department. The position requires a fair amount of time spent throughout Canada and the U.S. Experience in the poultry equipment industry is not necessary, although one should be familiar with working on machinery. Position will include a salary and benefits. Please send all inquiries to:

Meller Poultry Equipment Inc.
R.R. #1
Jarvis, ON N0A 1J0
Phone: (519) 587-2667

News

Over 10,000 postcards delivered to Paul Martin

TORONTO (CPJ) — A coalition of child poverty advocates handed over 10,000 postcards to John Godfrey, MP from Don Valley West and chair of the Children's Agenda Caucus of the Liberal Party. The postcards urge Finance Minister Paul Martin to keep his promise to the poor children of Canada.

The Let's Invest In Canada's Children campaign is calling on the federal government to make the elimination of child poverty "a great national objective" in the next federal budget. Finance Minister Paul Martin has said we need a great national effort to deal directly with child poverty in Canada. The thousands of people who have signed these cards agree. Canadians want Martin and the Chretien government to follow through on their statements.

Let's Invest in Canada's Children is jointly sponsored by many of Canada's faith communities, along with Citizens for Public Justice (CPJ), the Campaign Against Child Poverty, and Campaign 2000.

Let's Invest in Canada's Children began as an initiative of CPJ and the faith communities in the fall of 1998. Since then, people have been photocopying the cards and brochures and getting them signed by friends, neighbors, co-workers and others. The campaign will run through November 1999, the tenth anniversary of the Parliamentary resolution to eliminate child poverty in Canada by the year 2000.

Last week the initial installment of signed cards — over 10,000 to date — was handed over to the Finance Minister's office. A campaign spokesperson said, "We are pleased to work with strong advocates for children, such as John Godfrey, who has agreed to personally deliver these cards to Mr. Martin."

The number of children growing up poor has increased to one and a half million in Canada. Critics also say it is clear that a family's level of income affects the well-being of children. Children living below the low-income threshold face a greater risk of poor health, learning difficulties, hyperactivity and the long-term effects these problems pose.

Children hurt the most

Beyond these facts and figures lies the reality that hunger and homelessness are on the rise

among young families. The number of families relying on food banks and emergency shelters is growing even in these "good" economic times. Between 1997 and 1998, for example, the number of food bank users grew by 5.4 per cent — that during a year of the strongest economic growth this decade. Children make up over 40 per cent of food bank recipients although they represent only 25 per cent of the population.

The faith communities, social agencies and community groups that are participating in the campaign share the conviction that "it is a public responsibility to assure the well-being of all members of society," says CPJ.

Throughout this decade, many faith and community groups have made efforts to deal with the growing problem of poverty, sponsoring soup kitchens, food banks, breakfast programs, community kitchens, community gardens, emergency shelters and job-finding clubs.

"All of these initiatives are important for alleviating poverty and strengthening bonds of community. But, they are not a substitute for government fulfilling its responsibilities to promote the common good for all," say the campaign organizers. Therefore, they are proposing the following points for government action.

Government must do its part

The federal government, working with the provinces, should:

1. Improve child benefits for low and modest-income families, including those families on social assistance;
2. Ensure the health of every newborn by investing in proven early-intervention strategies, including improved access to pre-natal care and improved nutrition;
3. Develop high-quality, affordable early-childhood care and education;
4. Implement an effective strategy to increase the availability of affordable and safe housing;
5. Increase the availability of skill-training and decent jobs so that parents are better able to support and care for their children;
6. Provide adequate Employment Insurance benefits; and
7. Support initiatives to improve availability and access to parenting education.

Church News

Christian Reformed Church

Calls accepted:

— to First CRC, Ladner (Delta), B.C., **Rev. Henry Jonker** of First CRC, Victoria, B.C.

— to Good News Community Church, Kent, Wash., **Rev. John Van Hemert**, of First Vancouver CRC. New address as of March 1, 1999: Pastor John Van Hemert and Mrs. Jean Van Hemert, Good News Community, 27221 132nd Ave. SE, WA 98042-9035. Phone: (206) 639-1324.

Eligible for a call:

— Classis Huron, at its Jan. 13, 1999, meeting, declared **Mr. Vic Vandermolen** eligible for a call after he successfully sustained the examination to be admitted to the ministry of the Word in the CRC of NA by way of Art. 7 of the C.O. This decision was made with the concurrence of the Synodical deputies from Classes Toronto, Hamilton and Niagara. Classis Huron heartily recommends the churches to consider Mr. Vandermolen for a call. He may be contacted at 112 Admiral Road, Kitchener, ON N2M 1R1 or by telephone at (519) 743-4561. Herman Jonker, Stated Clerk

Miscellaneous

Financial Assistance

Those from congregations in **Classis Niagara** who are planning to or are presently **studying for full-time ministry in the Christian Reformed Church** as a pastor and/or evangelist and who are in need of financial assistance for the 1999-2000 academic year are invited to contact the secretary of the Student Fund Committee — **Louie VanderBerg**, 1662 Second Avenue, R.R. #3, St. Catharines, ON L2R 6P9, Fax (905) 641-4624.

Application form deadline is March 10, 1999.

Bethel Christian Reformed Church, in Dunnville, Ont., is seeking a full-time

PASTOR

to provide sound biblical preaching, ministry to youth and pastoral care. Our church membership stands at 110 families. Please send us a copy of your profile. Our church profile is available upon request. For more information please contact **Mr. William Aantjes**, R.R. 3, Wellandport, ON L0R 2J0. Phone: (905) 386-6633.

Small Contract Ministry Position

Fellowship Christian Reformed Church of Edmonton, Alta., is looking for a person to do effective preaching approximately 24 times per year. The position includes some standard ministry functions and spiritual counselling. Fellowship is a lay-directed congregation with much involvement from its approximately 190 members. In our attempt to live our faith we struggle with issues of community, social justice and inclusivity. For information about the church and a position description please contact the **Pastoral Committee c/o Jim Choles**, 780-455-4812; 14432-110 Ave., Edmonton, AB T5N 1J4;

Evangelistic Materials in Arabic

Also, in English, *The Bible and Islam* \$5.95 Canada/ \$4.95 U.S. And a folder of essays on Understanding the Middle East (\$1.50)

Write: **The Back to God Hour** P.O. Box 5070 Burlington, ON L7R 3Y8

Miscellaneous

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Calendar of Events

Please submit only brief items. Placement is subject to space availability. Lengthy, multiple-event announcements will be rejected. We reserve the right to edit the material and to charge a nominal, per issue fee per item inserted.

Feb. 13 Concert Times of Refreshing, by Peter Tigheelaar, at Immanuel Chr. Ref. Church, **Hamilton**, Ont., 61 Mohawk Rd. W. (corner W. 5th and Mohawk), at 7 p.m.

Freewill offering. For info. call (905) 544-0197 (#).

Mar. 11 and 12 The Woodstock Dutch Theatre Group presents *Er loopt een streepe door*. Market Centre Theatre, **Woodstock**, Ont., 8 p.m. Advance tickets only. Info. (519) 283-6285 (#).

Mar. 20 The Woodstock Dutch Theatre Group presents *Er loopt een streepe door*. Festival Theatre, **Drayton**, Ont., 7:30 p.m. Tickets at the theatre. Info. (519) 283-6285 (#).

Mar. 26 and 27 The Woodstock Dutch Theatre Group presents *Er loopt een streepe door*. Dutch Canadian Hall, **London**, Ont., 8 p.m. Tickets at Mike's Deli. Info. (519) 283-6285 (#).

Apr. 10 The Woodstock Dutch Theatre Group presents *Er loopt een streepe door*. Great Lakes Christian College, **Beamsville**, Ont., 7:30 p.m. Info. (519) 283-6285 (#).

Apr. 10th Annual Coffee Break/Story Hour Inspirational Rally at the Peoples Church, **Toronto**, Ont. Speaker: Stephanie Fast. Theme: Created for Destiny. Cost \$20. Registration: 8:30 a.m.; closing with refreshments at 4:30 p.m. For more information call Ellen Hessels at (905) 457-7490.

Evangelical presence and a letter

Evangelicals attended the Assembly in various capacities. Some were present as official delegates representing their churches, which are members of the WCC. But the vast majority of evangelicals (as well as Pentecostals) remain outside the WCC.

Since the Vancouver Assembly in 1983, evangelicals have met together to discuss Assembly deliberations and resolutions, and have issued their assessment in an "Evangelical Letter," which is usually published by the WCC in its official report.

At this Assembly rather pronounced differences among those attending the meetings of evangelicals appeared. These differences are closely related to factors such as the nature and duration of people's previous involvement with the WCC, the national and church context out of which a person speaks, one's theological outlook, and, of course, personality.

Striking about the evangelical response to this Assembly was that these differences for the first time led to the publication of two letters.

A cry from the heart

While there is much overlap and even general agreement between the two letters, and while even the authors of the second let-



ter also signed the first, the felt need for the second letter is revealing.

The second letter was written by a small committee of four people. Three were from the Third World: one from the Philippines (Prof. Melba Maggay pictured above), one from Ghana, and one from Peru. The fourth was from Germany.

The overall tone of this second letter is far more positive than the first. It begins with a strong endorsement of WCC initiatives. Strikingly, these concern primarily social justice issues: debt relief, the decade against all forms of vio-

lence, the critique of globalization, the continuing fight against all abuses of human rights. This emphasis reflects not an ideological difference, first of all, but the concrete situation of "their people."

This orientation is also reflected in the style and length of the letter. Rather than a long and somewhat analytical statement, the authors wanted a pithy statement, a *cri de coeur*, giving voice to the cry of their Third World sisters and brothers. Many of us encouraged the initiative represented by this shorter letter and signed it, as well as the longer letter.

Two faiths — one friendship



While in many countries, such as Indonesia, Sudan and Nigeria, Muslims and Christians live in great tension or even outright conflict, the two women pictured here, the one on the left, a Muslim, the one on the right, a Christian, are colleagues and friends. They are part of an institute which has for decades promoted Christian-Muslim dialogue and co-operation.

An evangelical pastor from Ghana told me that many families in his country have members who are Christian and others who are Muslim. In his own extended family he has cousins, uncles and aunts who are Muslim. "They try to convert me; I try to convert them. But it's no problem."

Sign of things to come?

At any international gathering one can't help but be fascinated by the multi-hued variety of dress, especially of the women. The rainbow colors and textures, the inventive head-dresses that seem to be newly spun each morning by deftly twirling and strategically pinning a length of simple cloth around one's head — these become symbols of the enormous riches of the diverse cultures.

But at an ecumenical assembly such as this, the variegated styles of clothes and cloth speak of more. Seeing a crowd, as through a kaleidoscope, converge in one place to become a gathering, a congregation worshipping the same God, the same Lord, one catches a glimpse of the day when people of all tribes and tongues and nations will bring the riches of their cultures into the city of God.



GEORGE VANTERVELDE PHOTOS

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Correction:

In CC's January 25 issue, on page 2, Ray Elgersma was referred to as "the Canadian Ministries director of the Council of CRCs in Canada." There is no longer a Council of CRCs in Canada. Elgersma's position is Canadian Ministries Director of the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

News

Olympic gold medalist shares faith and wrestling talents

Stephen VanHelden

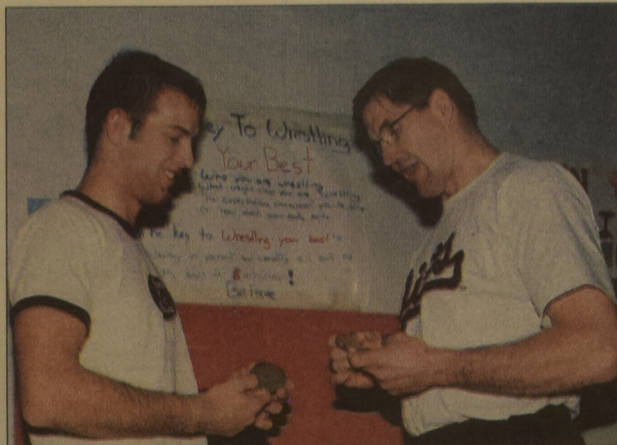
CALGARY — The University of Calgary Dino's Wrestling team received a special treat in January as former American Olympic Gold Medalist John Peterson showed them some special moves and also shared with them his Christian faith.

Looking more like a 40-year old than the 50 years he is, Peterson was in town for three days representing Athletes in Action (AIA). The group works with professional athletes and coaches worldwide.

Peterson, who stands about 6 feet tall and has hands that seem the size of bear paws, impressed the students and coach Mitch Ostberg. "It's fantastic having him here," said Ostberg afterwards. "He teaches good, basic, classic techniques. That's what wins. Everyone has unique skills, even if one of the wrestlers can pick up one of those skills, it's a success."

Ostberg said he was open to the message that Peterson brings and the ministering he did with the team. "We are adults, and it's good for them to hear this," he said. "They can make their own decisions."

One of Canada's Olympic wrestling prospects, Wade Elliott, shared the enthusiasm of his fellow wrestlers. "Listening to someone who has Olympic medals is very meaningful," Elliott learned some tips on control positions from Peterson, something he needs work at, he explained. Elliott is also open to Peterson's Christian message,



Olympic hopeful Wade Elliott (left) looks at John Peterson's gold and silver medals for inspiration.

he acknowledged. A kinesiology graduate of the U. of C., Elliott is fine-tuning his wrestling skills for the Olympic trials which begin in one year.

Love of wrestling

Peterson helps athletes around the world and shares the message of Christ. He recalls the day vividly when he warmed up in the hallway in the small and old Maurice Richard Arena in Montreal at the '76 Olympics. Peterson remembers seeing famous broadcaster Jim McKay and the TV monitor.

"It really hit me emotionally. I began to cry," Peterson recounted. "I saw the big Turkish guy in the other corner and I don't think he

was crying," joked Peterson. "It helped me though; it released all that emotion I had built up." It must have, Peterson won the gold medal.

The soft-spoken Peterson, who now lives in his hometown in Wisconsin, spent 10 years in Europe working with athletes and witnessing first-hand the fall of communism. "We were invited to train with different teams in Europe," Peterson explained. "The Polish coach once told us, 'I love having you guys coming here; you wrestle because you love it; my guys wrestle because it's a job.'"

Peterson also said the Polish were eager to hear about the Bible, as communist rule often forbade religious freedom. "We know

about wrestling, but you guys know about the Bible. My guys need to hear about that, too," the coach told Peterson. "Many people don't realize the role the church had in bringing the communist walls down," Peterson said.

Peterson says there is a spiritual battle going on in our world and we Christians have to stand up for the truth. "God can do wonderful things. In the end every knee will bow to Christ. It's exciting to be able to warn people who don't know anything about God, [that] they need to get ready, and that there is a real message of hope."

A real gentleman

While Peterson tells fascinating stories, his friends and acquaintances respect the man perhaps more for his humility than for the gold and silver medals he has. "He has no airs about him," says Steve Sellers, a local field worker for AIA and a friend of Peterson's.

Sellers has met many athletes who are quite the opposite. "I met one the other day," says Sellers, explaining the arrogance he encounters with some athletes. Coach Ostberg echoes Sellers comments. "He's a gentleman and very approachable. He brings a very positive message."

As for the future, Peterson will continue his work with athletes and coaches around the world. And in the end, groups like the U. of C. wrestling team will be stronger because of Peterson's dedication, say his admirers.

News Digest

Ottawa funds face

OTTAWA — A group of Quebecers will mark the new millennium by using vegetation to create a giant image of John the Baptist on the side of a mountain. The federal government will kick in \$250,000 to the project through the Millennium Partnership Program. The gigantic "artwork" will cover one square kilometre on Mont Edouard, a ski mountain in the Saguenay Valley, and will be built from selected trees.

"This innovative project has no political connotation, but it shows Quebecers are different," spokesperson Normand Dagenais told the *National Post*. "I think this could be the largest fresco made of plant life in Canada, if not in the world." John the Baptist is the patron saint of French Canadians.

A dumb blonde book?

MONTREAL (CP) — While some people question why Ottawa is funding a sculpture of John the Baptist, others are perplexed that the government is giving \$98,000 to help a company publish a joke book about dumb blondes. Heritage Canada has given the grant to a Montreal firm which is publishing, in French, the book called *500 of the Best Dumb Blonde Jokes*.

"This is really a slap in the face," says Joan Grant-Cummings, head of the National Action Committee on the Status of Women. "This is from a government that is Liberal and is supposed to advance social equality." A spokesperson for Heritage Canada says the \$98,000 went to the Edimag company, and was not specifically earmarked for the joke book.

Montana gets speed limit

HELENA, Montana (AP) — The Montana Supreme Court has thrown out that state's "reasonable and proper" daytime speed limit, a decision that some people fear could turn highways into racetracks. Montana is the only state without a numeric daytime speed limit for cars and light trucks. The court said this law is unconstitutionally vague and does not give drivers fair notice of what specific speed could be a violation.

But Col. Craig Reap, chief of the Montana Highway Patrol, said he is worried that the ruling will encourage some motorists to go nuts. "There will be some that think there is absolutely no control," he said.

Family class immigrants may include same-sex partners

Alan Doerksen

OTTAWA — The Canadian government is planning changes to immigration laws, including special measures to allow same-sex partners to be sponsored to Canada.

Immigration Minister Lucienne Robillard has introduced proposals which would expand the definition of spouse to include common-law and same-sex couples. This definition is used to determine who may be sponsored as a family class immigrant and who may accompany the main applicant in other categories.

Explaining the change, Robillard said in January, "The makeup of our society is no longer the same. The definition of family is changing."

Canada's immigration policies related to adoption would also be changed to better protect the interests of children, and to promote the

principle that an adopted child and a biological child should have the same rights. Since adoption falls under provincial jurisdiction, the government will consult the provinces about this, according to an Immigration Canada press release.

Another proposal would make it easier for spouses and dependent children already in Canada to apply for permanent residence from within Canada, as long as those individuals hold legal status in Canada at the time they apply.

Family togetherness still a priority

"Family reunification will remain the cornerstone of Canadian immigration policy," said Robillard. "Canada has a long tradition of supporting the reunification of Canadians with their close family members from abroad.... This tradition has enriched the lives of

the families and assisted them in achieving self-reliance."

The government also plans changes to the process of selecting refugees overseas that would focus more on protecting them than on their ability to settle successfully in Canada within a year. New procedures would allow members of a refugee family to be processed together overseas and, where this is not possible, to provide for their speedy reunion in Canada.

The proposals suggest streamlining the Immigration and Refugee Board so that three existing layers of decision-making — refugee status determination, post-determination risk review, and risk-related humanitarian review — would be reduced to one: a protection decision by the board. Eligibility criteria for refugees would be made more rigorous; claims would need to be presented within

30 days of arrival in Canada.

"The in-Canada refugee determination process must be fair and rapidly accessible to claimants who have genuine protection needs," said Robillard. "However, in order to maintain the efficiency and integrity of the process, it should also send a clear message to those who do not deserve protection. Canada plans to improve its role within its borders."



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